

# The TAO of Healthy Eating

Dietary Wisdom  
According to  
Chinese Medicine

SECOND EDITION



Bob Flaws

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## Preface

This is the third revised edition of a book on Chinese dietary therapy that began its life titled *Arisal of the Clear: A Simple Guide to Healthy Eating According to Traditional Chinese Medicine* back in the early 1990s. In 1998, this book was retitled and expanded to become *The Tao of Healthy Eating*. However, it has been a full 10 years since its last revision. So we thought it could use a bit of sprucing up. Thirty years after writing my first book on Chinese dietary therapy, I still believe that the common sense of the Chinese medical approach to healthy eating makes as much or more sense as any available in the world today. In a time when a new diet seems to be touted by the popular media every few month or so, Chinese dietary therapy is based on 2,500 years of documented, continuous, evolving experience. Based on my 30 years experience as a clinician, I believe that up to 70% of all chronic, noncommunicable disease is due to faulty diet and improper lifestyle, and this is not just my belief. In 2002, the World Health Organization published a white paper titled "Diet, Nutrition and Chronic Disease" which outlined the relationship between faulty diet and such increasing common diseases as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and stroke.<sup>1</sup> There is even a strong relationship between faulty diet and cancer. In the same white paper, the authors state, "For populations in developed countries,

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<sup>1</sup> WHO, "Diet, Nutrition and Chronic Disease," [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/trs/WHO\\_TRS\\_916.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/trs/WHO_TRS_916.pdf), last retrieved 1/17/2008

where cancer rates are highest and account for approximately one-quarter of all deaths, some epidemiologists estimate that 30-40% of cancers in men and up to 60% of cancers in women are attributable to diet.<sup>2</sup> According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 80 percent of heart disease and stroke, 80 percent of type 2 diabetes, and 40 percent of all cancers could be eliminated by simply correcting diet, increasing physical activity, and stopping smoking, with correcting diet number one on this list.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, if one wants to live a long, healthy, enjoyable, and productive life, we need to pay attention to what we eat. If this book helps shine some light on this subject, then bon appetit and wan sui, good eating and may you live 10,000 years.

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Boulder, CO  
Feb. 7, 2008

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., [http://www.mcspotlight.org/media/reports/who\\_rep.html](http://www.mcspotlight.org/media/reports/who_rep.html), last retrieved 1/17/2008

<sup>3</sup> "The Growing Crisis of Chronic Disease in the United States," <http://fightchronicdisease.org/pdfs/ChronicDisease-FactSheet.pdf>, last retrieved 1/17/2008



# A Brief History of Chinese Dietary Therapy 1

One of the reasons for learning about Chinese medical dietary therapy (*yin shi zhi liao fa*, 饮食疗法) is its long recorded history. Chinese dietary therapy is not some passing fad. It is a time-tested system of theory and practice at least 2,000 years old. Therefore, before immediately jumping into what Chinese doctors suggest about healthy eating, I think it is useful to take a brief look at its history.

By no later than 200 BCE (Before the Common Era), one or more unknown medical scholars compiled what has become the fundamental cannon of Chinese medical theory, the *Huang Di Nei Jing* (*The Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic*). Although this two-volume compendium<sup>1</sup> mainly deals with yin-yang, five phase, qi-blood, and 12 channel theories and their applications to acupuncture-moxibustion, it also contains a number of references to the principles of healthy eating. For instance, in the *Su Wen* (*Plain Questions*) chapter on the relationship between the five viscera and the seasons, it is stated that, "Medicinals are used to fight evils, [while] grains are used to nourish the body, and fruits, meats, and vegetables aid in this effort—all [five] flavors working together to supplement the qi and essence."<sup>2</sup> This statement implies that grains should

<sup>1</sup> The two "volumes" or books of the *Nei Jing* are the *Su Wen* (*Plain Questions*) and the *Ling Shu* (*Miraculous Pivot*).

<sup>2</sup> Liu Jilin, *Chinese Dietary Therapy*, Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, 2005, p. 16 with slight retranslation by Bob Flaws. The five flavors are sweet, acid or pungent, salty, bitter, and sour.

be the mainstay of the diet, while meats, vegetables, and fruits should be eaten to complete and support that basis, and most Chinese doctors today would agree with that statement. Similarly, in another chapter in the *Su Wen* (*Plain Questions*) on the five principles, it reiterates this point of view by saying, "Grains, meats, fruits, and vegetables must all be eaten to provide nutrition."<sup>3</sup> In other words, man cannot live by bread alone. Further, it was the authors of the *Nei Jing* (*Inner Classic*) or their ultimate sources who ascribed correspondences between the five flavors, cereals, fruits, vegetables, and meats, the five viscera, and the five phases.<sup>4</sup> Thus even today, most Chinese doctors believe that sweet foods have a special effect on the spleen, sour foods, especially, af-

"Medicinals are used to fight evils, [while] grains are used to nourish the body, and fruits, meats, and vegetables aid in this effort—all [five] flavors working together to supplement the qi and essence."

fect the liver, salty foods "go to" the kidneys, acrid foods especially affect the lungs, and bitter foods have a special effect on the heart. It should also be mentioned that other books found in early Han dynasty (circa 150 BCE) tombs also contain dietary recipes for the treatment of disease and the promotion of good health. Therefore, the materials on dietary therapy found in the *Nei Jing* were not limited to that text alone but appear to be widely disseminated at the time.

By the end of the Han dynasty (220 CE or Common Era), another pillar of Chinese medical theory and practice had come into existence. This was the *Shang Han Lun/Jin Kui Yao Lue* (*Treatise on Damage [Due to] Cold/Essentials of the Golden Coffer*) by Zhang Zhong-jing. The *Shang Han Lun/Jin Kui Yao Lue* is considered the first classic of Chinese medicinal prescriptions. Its several hundred prescriptions are still in use today and form the backbone of most practitioner's clinical repertoire. In this book, Zhang used both medicinal herbs (*cao yao*, 草药) and commonly eaten foods in combination in many of his formulas. Some of the commonly eaten foods found in these prescriptions include ginger (both fresh and dried), cinnamon, jujubes or red dates, licorice, Job's tears barley, malt syrup, malted bean sprouts, rice (both glutinous and non-glutinous), fermented soybeans, vinegar, honey, alcohol, mandarin oranges (both ripe and unripe), orange peel, lard, gelatin, egg yolk, lamb, seaweed, Sichuan pepper, and scallions. To this day, almost 2,000 years later, there is the saying in Chinese medicine, "Medicine and food [share] the same source" (*Yao shi*

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 16

<sup>4</sup> The five major viscera of Chinese medicine are the liver, heart, spleen, lungs, and kidneys which correspond to the wood, fire, earth, metal, and water phases respectively.

*tong yuan*, 药食同源). This means that there is no hard and fast line between medicinal substances and foods and, by extension, that every food has its impact on the health of the body. In addition, Zhang devoted the last two chapters of the *Jin Kui Yao Lue* (*Essentials of the Golden Coffer*) to specific recommendations on dietary therapy.

The next two historical periods in Chinese were the Three Kingdoms period (220-265 CE) and the Jin dynasty (265-420 CE), and one of the most famous medical texts written during those times was Ge Hong's *Zhu Hou Bing Ji Fang* (*Formulas [to Keep] Behind the Elbow for Emergencies*). In this book, Ge recorded a number of simple, proven prescriptions, many of which are dietary in nature. As a Taoist adept, Ge was very interested in health and longevity techniques, including what to eat and what not to eat in order to live an especially long time. In another of his books, the *Bao Pu Zi Nei Pian* (*Bao Pu-zi's Inner Writings*), Ge explains a long list of activities one should regulate if one wants to live to 100 years.<sup>5</sup> As part of this list, he counsels, "Don't overemphasize any on the five flavors when eating, for too much sour damages the spleen, too much bitter damages the lungs, too much acrid damages the liver, too much salt damages the heart, and too much sweet damages the kidneys." As we will see in Chapter 3, these same kinds of prohibitions against overeating any of the five flavors are still a foundation of Chinese medical dietary therapy.

In the Southern and Northern period (420-589 CE), another Taoist by the name of Tao Hong-jing compiled his famous *Shen Nong Ben Cao Jing* (*The Divine Husbandman's Materia Medica Classic*). This book contains the medicinal uses of 365 substances—vegetable, animal, and mineral—and many of these medicinals are also commonly eaten foods, such as Job's tears barley, jujubes, chicken meat, honey, lotus rhizomes, lotus seeds, sesame seeds, kelp, kombu, pears, carp, red beans (a.k.a. aduki or azuki beans), cow's milk, wheat, and grapes. Each ingredient in this book is described according to the five flavors and the four natures. The four natures are the four temperatures of foods. These are cold, cool, warm, and hot. (Of course, there is a "fifth" nature or temperature, the neutral which is neither cool nor warm.) Even today, when a Chinese doctor talks about the effects of a food on a particular person, he or she will take into account that food's nature or temperature. In this case, someone who is pathologically cold will be told to eat more warm and hot foods and to avoid cool and cold foods,

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<sup>5</sup> Ge Hong, *Bao Pu Zi Nei Pian*, translated by James R. Ware, appearing in *Alchemy, Medicine and Religion in the China of A.D. 320*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1966, p. 224, with slight retranslation by Bob Flaws

while someone who is too hot will be told to eat more cool and cold foods and avoid warm and hot foods.

Next we come to the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE) and the great Sun Si-miao. Sun was also a Taoist hermit and healer who lived in what is now Shanxi province in the very heart of China. Similar to both Ge Hong and Tao Hong-jing above, as a Taoist, Sun was very interested in longevity techniques and this led him to a special interest in dietary therapy for good health and long life. In his masterwork, *Qian Jin Yao Fang* (*Prescriptions [Worth] a Thousand [Pieces of] Gold*), Sun categorized the dietary properties and uses of a large assortment of fruits, vegetables, grains, fish, fowl, insects, and other animals. In addition, in the Preface to the *Qian Jin Yao Fang*, Sun discusses the importance and principles of dietary therapy to the point that many Chinese doctors cite Sun as the real fountainhead of contemporary Chinese medical dietary therapy. In fact, if one visits Sun's hermitage today, one can buy several books made up of Sun's precepts on healthy living, including dietary therapy, written in simplified characters which are easy to read by modern Chinese. In the summer of 2006, I visited this hermitage and purchased several of these booklets. In one titled *Yang Sheng Chang Shou Zi Mi* (*Secrets of Nourishing Life & Longevity*), Chapter 3 out of eight chapters is devoted to Sun's views on and prescriptions for dietary therapy for those wishing to live a long and healthy life. In this chapter, Sun discusses balancing the five flavors and well as the principles for regulating the diet in general. The fact that Sun lived to 100 years of age suggests he practiced what he preached and it worked well for him.

According to Liu Shi-lin, by the Song dynasty (960-1129 CE), it was common practice to use foods in both the prevention and treatment of disease.<sup>6</sup> Two of the most important works of that period were the Imperial Medical Department's *Tai Ping Hui Min He Ji Ju Fang* (*Imperial Grace Formulary of the Tai Ping [Era]*) and the *Sheng Ji Zong Lu* (*Complete Collection for Holy Relief*) which was also compiled under the official auspices of the imperial government. Both of these widely circulated books contained separate chapters on dietary therapy which include over 100 different recipes. Also in the Song dynasty, Chen Zhi published a book titled *Yang Lao Feng Qin Shu* (*A Book on Nourishing the Elderly [based on] Filial Piety*). This book deals specifically with geriatric dietary therapy and also includes many specific recipes.

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<sup>6</sup> Liu Jilin, *op. cit.*, p. 17

During the Yuan dynasty (1206-1368 CE), interest in dietary therapy in China continued. Among the number of books on Chinese dietary therapy published during this dynasty, the most famous of all was Hu Si-hui's *Yin Shi Xu Shi* (*A Handbook of Dietetics*) in 1330. Hu was a Chinese doctor at the imperial court who came from the Muslim minority. He primarily ministered to the imperial family's health via adjusting their diet. Hu put special emphasis on rationally combining daily foods as well as the addition of herbal medicinals to foods both for the prevention and treatment of disease. His book is still in print in China to this day; it is considered *that* important. It should also be mentioned that, around this same time, Li Dong-yuan, in his monumentally important *Pi Wei Lun* (*Treatise on the Spleen & Stomach*) shifted the emphasis in terms of the causation of chronic diseases from externally contracted pathogens to such internally engendered causes as emotional stress and faulty diet and lifestyle. This sea-change within the Chinese medical literature served to only place more emphasis on proper diet within the world of Chinese medicine. Further, it was Li who really stressed the importance of the "clear, bland diet" which we will talk about in Chapter 3.

In the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE), Li Shi-zhen described over 500 individual foods and their medicinal effects in his *Ben Cao Gang Mu* (*Detailed Outline of Materia Medica*). Other typical works from this period devoted specifically to dietary therapy include Lu He's *Shi Wu Ben Cao* (*A Materia Medica of Foodstuffs*), Ning Yuan's *Shi Jian Ben Cao* (*Verified Food Materia Medica*), Wu Lu's *Shi Pin Ji* (*A Collection of Foods & Drinks*), and Gao Lian's *Yin Zhuan Fu Shi Jian* (*Notes on the Use of Foods & Drinks*). Thus we can see that there was both quite an interest in and a growing literature on Chinese dietary therapy by this time.

In the Qing dynasty (1616-1911 CE), the role and practice of dietary therapy within the larger realm of Chinese medicine were accepted by essentially all high-class practitioners of Chinese medicine. The Qing dynasty was a time of growth in the professionalization of medicine as well as the development of the scholar-doctor. Thus we see more and more books being published during these centuries on all aspects of Chinese medicine and no less dietary therapy. Some of the most important books on Chinese dietary therapy from this dynasty include She Li-long's *Shi Wu Ben Cao Hui Zuan* (*A Compendium of Foodstuff Materia Medica*), Wang Shi-xiong's *Sui Xi Ju Yin Shi Pu* (*The Food & Drink Recipes of Sui Xi-ju*), Zhang Mu's *Tiao Ji Yin Shi Bian* (*A Study of Food & Drink [for] Regulating Diseases*), and Yuan Mei's *Sui Yuan Shi Dan* (*Food Elixirs*

[from] *Sui Yuan [Garden]*). These books cover the principles of both preventive and remedial diets and are filled with many recipes for the treatment of disease as well as for daily consumption.

Since the end of the Qing dynasty, every succeeding generation of Chinese doctors has produced new manuals of Chinese medical dietary therapy. On my shelf, I have at least a dozen such manuals published in China during the last 30 years, and this is just a random selection. There are a number of comprehensive textbooks on Chinese medical dietary therapy as well as many smaller, more specialized books on tea therapy, medicinal wines and tinctures, medicinal porridges, and even vinegar eggs. There

*... Chinese dietary therapy has been proven to work in a very diverse group of people from sea level to the heights of the Himalayas, from the cold tundra of the north to the tropics of Hainan in the south, and from damp coasts on the China Sea to the deserts of Chinese Turkistan.*

are also numerous materia medica or "dictionaries" of individual foods which give each food's flavor(s), nature, organ tropisms,<sup>7</sup> functions, indications, contraindications, and sample uses or recipes. Therefore, when it comes to Chinese dietary therapy, there is a relatively vast repository of time-tested knowledge.

Further, I would also like to point out that China is a huge country containing many different ethnic groups (or gene pools), many different geographic climates and environments, and many different cultures with their various lifestyles. Thus, Chinese dietary therapy has been proven to work in a very diverse group of people from sea level to the heights of the Hi-

malayas, from the cold tundra of the north to the tropics of Hainan in the south, and from damp coasts on the China Sea to the deserts of Chinese Turkistan. While some traditional diets, such as the Inuits' (or Eskimos'), may be too localized in its application both in terms of physical environment and applicable gene pool, I feel confident that, when modified to fit individual needs, the basic principles of this 2,000-year-old system of dietary therapy are workable for most people in most places.

<sup>7</sup> Organ tropism is typically referred to as "organ entry" or "channel regrouping" in Chinese medical texts. Under this heading, the various viscera or bowels a food primarily "enters" and effects are specified.





## The Basics of Good Health According to Chinese Medicine 2

In the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE), the famous Chinese doctor Sun Si-miao<sup>1</sup> said that when a person is sick, the doctor should first regulate the patient's diet and lifestyle. In most cases, these changes alone are enough to effect a cure over time. Sun Si-miao said that only if changes in diet and lifestyle are not enough should the doctor administer other interventions, such as internal medicine and acupuncture. Although most patients coming for professional Chinese medical treatment today do need internal medicine and/or acupuncture as well as changes in their diet and lifestyle to effect a more rapid cure, it is most definitely my experience that without appropriate changes in diet and lifestyle, herbs and acupuncture will not achieve their full and lasting effect.

### Form & Function

Based on my 30 years of clinical practice, I believe there are four basic foundations of achieving and maintaining good health. These are diet, exercise, adequate rest and re-

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<sup>1</sup> Sun Si-miao is regarded as one of the most important teachers on health and longevity within Chinese medicine. He studied with Confucianists, Buddhists, and Taoists and lived to 100 years of age. In the summer of 2006, I had the opportunity to visit his hermitage in Shanxi province and bow to the image of this great Chinese medical practitioner.

laxation, and a good mental attitude. Chinese medical theory is based on the concepts of yin and yang.<sup>2</sup> In terms of medicine, yin means form or substance (*xing*, 形) and yang means function (*yong*, 用). This is similar to the Western medical dichotomy between form and function. Form and function are interdependent. Substance or form is both the material, anatomical basis of function and its fuel. Function, on the other hand, activates and motivates form and also repairs, builds, and maintains it.

To help make this clearer to my patients, I often say the human organism is like a candle. A candle's function is to burn and, therefore, shed light. The flame of the candle is dependent on its form. At the same time, the candle's form, its wick and wax, is the fuel for the candle's function. Similarly, our various activities and consciousness are dependent upon our form, our physical body. Our functional activities are a product of consuming and transforming or metabolizing this substance. When we are young, we produce more substance than we consume and thus we are able to grow, repair, and keep our bodies youthful in shape and appearance. However, past a certain age, due to a decline in our bodily organs' efficiency, we no longer produce an excess of fuel or substance and so we begin to consume our own form. When we have consumed all of our yin substance, our organism no longer has sufficient fuel for function and so it ceases or dies.

*In relationship to diet, exercise is yang to diet's yin. Exercise keeps function performing at peak efficiency. However, in Chinese medicine, exercise and rest/relaxation are seen as the yin/yang aspects of a single issue.*

Unlike the candle which is endowed with a finite, nonreplenishable form at the moment of its making, we humans are capable of taking in new form or substance. We do this by breathing, eating, and drinking. It is eating and drinking which provide us with the substance which fuels our day-to-day activities and which is transformed into our body's material basis. Therefore, from the point of view of morphology or yin substance, we most definitely are what we eat, drink, and breathe.

Exercise is a type of function. It is activity (*dong*, 动, literally "stirring"). In relationship to diet, exercise is yang to diet's yin. Exercise keeps function performing at peak efficiency.

<sup>2</sup> Yin and yang are not any particular things as such. They are the two poles of all possible dichotomies. This means that something is yin only in relation to something else which, in terms of that relationship, is yang. Determining the yin and yang of any situation is one of, if not the main problem-solving methodologies and organizational systems within Chinese medicine.

In Chinese medicine, there are two types of essence. There is *xian tian zhi jing* (先天之精) or former heaven essence which is innate at birth. We inherit this former heaven essence at the moment of conception from our two parents. We are born with a finite amount of this former heaven essence. It is our endowment from our parents and the universe at large, and it is stored in the kidneys. However, this former heaven essence is supplemented by what is called *hou tian zhi jing* (后天之精) or latter heaven essence. This latter heaven essence is manufactured out of a combination of the air we breathe and the food and drink we consume similar to how a candle's flame is a combination of heat, oxygen, and fuel. Nutritive essence derived from food is transformed into qi (pronounced *chee*) and blood. Qi empowers function and blood nourishes form. As we move through each day, our activities consume both qi and blood. If, when we go to sleep at night, we have manufactured more qi and blood than we have used that day, this excess is transformed into acquired or latter heaven essence. Some of this latter heaven essence is stored in each of the five major organs or viscera (*zang*, 脏) of Chinese medicine—the heart, lungs, spleen, liver, and kidneys. However, the major portion of this acquired essence is stored in the kidneys which then become the Fort Knox of the body. This is summed up in the Chinese medical statement of fact, "The kidneys store the essence." (*Shen zang jing* 肾藏精.)

Every metabolic activity, every transformation within the organism requires both some life fire and some essence to act as catalyst and substrate respectively. If there were no acquired essence, we would be just like a candle. We would only be born with so much fuel and that would be used up fairly quickly. But, because latter heaven essence, derived from our diet, supplements our innate former heaven essence stored in our kidneys, this former heaven essence is capable of lasting a lifetime.

## Longevity, Diet & Lifestyle

Chinese medical theory believes that the human organism is built to live 100 years. According to the first chapter of the *Nei Jing* (*Inner Classic*), the "Bible" of Chinese medicine,<sup>5</sup> most people have enough essence to last five-score years. Barring accidental death or infectious disease, we are designed to last 100 years as long as former heaven essence is not squandered by excessive consumption and as long as latter heaven or

<sup>5</sup> The *Nei Jing* was compiled by a variety of authors some time in the Warring States period (476-221 BCE). It contains the fundamental theories that are still the bedrock of contemporary Chinese medicine. It is divided into two sections: the *Su Wen* (Simple Questions) and the *Ling Shu* (Miraculous Pivot).

However, in Chinese medicine, exercise and rest/relaxation (*jing*, 静) are seen as the yin/yang aspects of a single issue. If we are too active, i.e., hyperfunctional, we consume too much fuel or substance. Therefore, rest and relaxation are the flip side of the coin of activity. Because the fundamental view of Chinese medicine on health and disease is based on the Doctrine of the Mean (*zhong yong*, 中用),<sup>3</sup> functional activities should be moderate—not too much and not too little. If there is too little exercise, form or material substance is not adequately consumed and transformed and starts to accumulate and gum up the works in the form of phlegm, dampness, turbidity, and blood stasis. If there is too little rest, hyperactivity, be that physical, mental, or emotional, consumes too much substance and overheats the organism leading to burnout (qi and yin vacuity).<sup>4</sup> This means that diet on the one hand must be balanced by adequate activity and rest/relaxation on the other.

## Fire & Essence

The use of a candle as an analogy is actually quite accurate according to Chinese medical theory. Life is seen in Chinese medicine as a series of warm transformations (*wen hua*, 温化). Living qi (*sheng qi*, 生气) or energy in the body is yang and yang is inherently warm. The root yang of the entire body is called the *ming men zhi huo* (命门之火) or the life-gate fire. This life-gate fire is ultimately responsible for all activities and transformations in the body. We live only as long as this fire of the life-gate burns within us and we are stone-cold dead when it burns out irrevocably.

This life-gate fire is associated with or has its material basis in the Chinese medical idea of the kidneys. In Chinese medicine, the kidneys (*shen*, 肾) are the fundamental, first organ. They are called the *xian tian zhi ben* (先天之本) or former heaven root. This means they are the prenatal foundation of the organism, both its form and function. The original source of function is the life-gate fire or original qi described above. Whereas the most essential material basis or pure substance is referred to as the essence (*jing*, 精) or kidney essence (*shen jing*, 肾精).

<sup>3</sup> The Doctrine of the Mean is the cornerstone of Confucianism. It basically teaches moderation in all things both the health and well-being of the individual and the community at large. Therefore, within Chinese medicine, health is the maintenance of balance and moderation in the body/mind's physiological activities, and disease is conversely a state of something within the body/mind being either too much (replete, *shi*, 实) or too little (vacuous, *xu*, 虚).

<sup>4</sup> Qi and yin vacuity is one of the professionally identified disease states or patterns in Chinese medicine. It is characterized by fatigue and lack of both mental and physical vigor on the one hand and restlessness, scanty sleep, mental agitation, and possible recurrent hot feelings on the other.

acquired essence is manufactured and stored to bolster and slow the use of former heaven essence. Since latter heaven essence is manufactured from the food and drink we ingest, it is no wonder that Chinese medical theory places such great importance on proper diet and promoting good digestion. Likewise, since acquired essence is stored in the kidneys at night when we sleep, it is no wonder why proper rest and sleep are important as well.

Here again I find an analogy helpful. Former heaven essence is like a patrimony or trust fund we inherit at birth. Latter heaven essence is like money which we save in the bank. It is that part of our daily economy above and beyond our operating expenses. When we store it as acquired essence, it and our former heaven essence together become our body's capital. It is said in alchemy that it takes gold to make gold and that the more gold one has, the more one can make. When applied to our inner alchemy, our original gold is our essence, both former and latter heaven. When these two essences are full and abundant, organ function is strong, metabolism is efficient, and we generate a profit each day. Therefore, it takes essence to make essence and the more essence we have, the more we can make. When we age, however, instead of living on our interest, we run a negative daily balance and are forced to dip into our capital. Eventually, we consume all our capital and we go bankrupt or die.

*Former heaven essence is like a patrimony or trust fund we inherit at birth. Latter heaven essence is like money which we save in the bank. It is that part of our daily economy above and beyond our operating expenses.*

## Essence, Qi, & Spirit

It is said in Chinese medicine that essence (material basis) becomes qi (气, functional activity)<sup>6</sup> and when qi accumulates it becomes *shen* (神) or spirit. Spirit in Chinese medicine refers to the qi accumulated in our heart which then manifests as our consciousness and our mental/emotional activities. Excessive thinking or excessive emotionality (i.e., mental-emotional activity) consume great stores of qi and, therefore, essence. That is why the fourth basic foundation of good health is a healthy mental attitude. What is meant by a good attitude in Chinese medicine is spelled out fairly

<sup>6</sup> The concept of qi defies easy definition. While it is often referred to as energy by Westerners and many modern Chinese, traditionally, it is defined as the "finest material substance" in the world. In any case, qi has five functions within the human body and these are to warm, defend, move, transform, and contain. In general, in Chinese medicine, qi always describes function.

exactly. When the seven affects—joy, anger, grief, melancholy, thinking, fear, and fright—are appropriate to their stimuli, these are natural subjective experiences and their experience is the purpose of life. Nonetheless, their experience does consume essence. Essence without spirit or mental activity is meaningless in human terms just as a candle which does not shed light is also useless. The consumption of essence through our conscious experience is what is called in Chinese medicine our spirit brilliance (*shen ming*, 神明). *Ming* (明) means brilliance or light. Thus essence's ultimate purpose is to be transformed into the light of consciousness.

However, just as physical activity or stirring may be excessive, so may mental-emotional stirring. Therefore, in Chinese medicine, it is very important that we each get enough physical rest and mental relaxation and that we not let our minds and emotions run away with us. Otherwise, we burn through our qi and its ultimate fuel, our essence, too quickly. When that happens, we age prematurely, heal more slowly, and are also prone to disease-causing malfunctions within and invasion by disease-causing entities from without. Thus it is said in Chinese medicine,

[Keep] a constant, regular lifestyle  
[And] suitable amounts of work and rest.

As well as,

Be happy with a light, open view;  
Guard against being seized by sudden changes in emotion.

I opened this chapter invoking the wisdom of the great Chinese doctor Sun Si-miao. In the Qing dynasty (1644-1911 CE), Sun Xi-miao said:

To live long, people should take care not to worry too much, not to get too angry, not to get too sad, not to get frightened, not to do too much, not to talk too much, and not to laugh too much. One should not have too many desires nor face numerous upsetting conditions. All these are harmful to the health.

Conversely, this Dr. Sun went on to say:

One who knows how to conserve one's life is one who thinks less, worries less, has fewer desires, is less active, talks less, is less upset, has less joy

[here meaning less excitement] and less anger, and does less wrong.  
These 12 lesses are the key to conserving one's life.

In other words, we need to cultivate a broad, open mind with a happy mood and avoid all unnecessary worries and stress.

We must remember that we all get old and we all die. We all experience pain as well as pleasure. These are inevitable. When we fail to recognize the naturalness of this condition and rather take it as a personal affront or attack, we run after pleasure and its means in order to avoid suffering at all cost. Paradoxically, this ceaseless running towards pleasure and running away from pain consumes essence and causes the very disease, suffering and death we seek to avoid. It is transcendence of this rat-race which the wisdom of the East posits as a good, healthy mental attitude.

Because of the inter-relationships between essence, qi, and spirit, it is easy to see why diet, exercise, rest, and the development of a good, healthy attitude are so important to achieving and maintaining good health. This book focuses on dietary therapy. That does not mean that diet is more important than the other three; in truth, I would say that the chronic, non-infectious diseases of this time are due to a lack of wisdom in all four of these crucial areas. Although contemporary Western diet has shown some signs of improving in recent years, it is basically out of balance. In addition, we all tend to be too sedentary and, at the same time, too mentally and emotionally stressed.

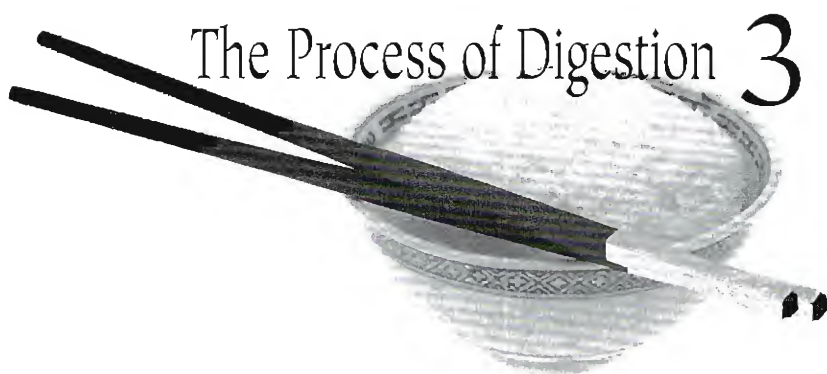
It is relatively simple to say that one should get enough exercise and rest. In fact, we are constantly bombarded in the media by one simple fix or another from a running shoe manufacturer; a health club chain or a drug company; a simple fix that really doesn't fix anything but often pushes too far one way or the other. And although Buddhists, Daoists and Confucianists have filled libraries on how to achieve a true mental balance, this is not easily conveyed or the intent of this book. Diet, on the other hand, although seemingly open to a great deal of difference of opinion and confusion, is something that the Chinese have written about simply and clearly for centuries. I believe that these ancient, time-tested teachings on diet found in Chinese medicine

*Diet, although seemingly open to a great deal of difference of opinion and confusion, is something that the Chinese have written about simply and clearly for centuries. I believe that these ancient, time-tested teachings on diet found in Chinese medicine can provide, simple, clear, common-sense guidelines to a healthy diet.*

can provide, simple, clear, commonsense guidelines to a healthy diet. It is my hope that this summary of all those writings will greatly benefit the quality of life of everyone who reads this book.



## The Process of Digestion 3

A black and white photograph of a traditional Chinese bowl filled with rice. Two dark chopsticks are resting diagonally across the top of the bowl. The bowl has a decorative rim with a repeating geometric pattern. The background is plain white.

In Chinese, the digestive system is called the *xiao hua xi tong*. The words *xi tong* (系统) simply mean system, but the words *xiao* (消) and *hua* (化) are more pregnant with meaning. *Xiao* means to disperse and *hua* means to transform. In Chinese medicine, digestion equals the dispersion of pure substances to be retained and impure substances to be excreted after these have undergone transformation. Therefore, the digestive tract is called the *xiao hua dao* (消化道) or pathway of dispersion and transformation. In Chinese medicine, we mostly describe the process of digestion in terms of the functions of the Chinese spleen and stomach. Once one understands the functions of the spleen (*pi*, 脾) and stomach (*wei*, 胃) according to Chinese medical theory, Chinese dietary theory becomes very clear and logical.

### Three Burners (*san jiao*, 三焦)

The spleen and stomach are a yin-yang pair. The stomach is one of the six bowels (*liu fu*, 六腑) and is relatively yang. The spleen is one of the five viscera (*wu zang*, 五脏) and is relatively yin. The stomach's function is to receive food and liquids and to "decompose and cook" these. In Chinese medicine, the stomach is likened to a pot on a stove. As mentioned in the previous chapter, all physiological transformations in Chi-

nese medicine are warm transformations. The trunk of the body is seen as three alchemical retorts called *jiao* (焦) or burners. There is an upper burner containing the heart and lungs, a middle burner containing the spleen and stomach, and a lower burner containing the kidneys, intestines, liver, and reproductive organs.

## The Stomach as a Pot

The stomach is the pot of the middle burner and the spleen is both the fire under this pot and the distillation mechanism to which this pot is attached. Just as a mash rots and ripens in a pot, so foods and liquids decompose and are cooked within the stomach.<sup>1</sup> In Chinese medical terms, this means that, as foods and liquids decompose

*The stomach is the pot of the middle burner and the spleen is both the fire under this pot and the distillation mechanism to which this pot is attached.*

and are cooked, the pure or clear (*qing*, 清) and impure or turbid (*zhuo*, 浊) parts of these foods and liquids are separated. It is then the spleen's function to distill or drive upward the purest parts of foods and liquids, the so-called finest essence of liquids and foods (*qing wei zhi yin shi*, 精微之饮食), sending the pure part of foods up to the lungs and the pure part of liquids up to the heart. The pure part of foods, called the *five flavors* (*wu wei*, 五味) becomes the basis for the creation of *qi* within the lungs. The pure part of liquids becomes the basis for the creation of blood within the heart. The sending up of the pure part of the foods and liquids by the spleen is called the *upbearing of the clear* (*sheng qing*, 升清) and is the Chinese medical spleen's main function.<sup>2</sup>

The stomach then sends down the impure or turbid part of foods to be further transformed by the large intestine, and the impure parts of liquids to be further transformed by the small intestine. In Chinese medicine, the large intestine's function is to reabsorb the pure part of the impure foods or solids. This becomes the postnatal or latter heaven fuel for kidney yang or the life-gate fire. The small intestine's function is to reabsorb the pure part of the impure parts of liquids. This is transformed into the body's thick liquids (*ye*, 液),

<sup>1</sup> In Chinese, the word for decompose is *fu* (腐) which literally means to rot or putrify. The word *shu* (熟) means to cook and also to ripen. Therefore, some English language texts on Chinese medicine talk about the stomach's "rot-tening and ripening." However, such a translation obscures the simile of the stomach being likened to a fermentation tun or vat.

<sup>2</sup> The Chinese medical concept of the organs is quite different in most cases from the biomedical concept of the same English name. Therefore, the Chinese medical spleen should not be seen as identical to the spleen we all learned about in high school biology. For a more complete discussion of these differences and their medical implications, see Ted Kaptchuk's *The Web That Has No Weaver*.

such as cerebrospinal and intra-articular fluids, and nourishes postnatal kidney yin. The large intestine conducts the impure of the impure solids down and out of the body as feces. The small intestine conducts the impure of the impure liquids to the bladder from whence they are excreted as urine. This sending down of the impure part of foods and liquids initiated by the stomach is called the *downbearing of the turbid* (*jiang zhuo*, 降浊).

So we can see that in Chinese medicine, digestion is spoken of as the separation of the clear and turbid. This separation is dependent upon the *qi hua* (气化) or qi-transformation of the middle burner or spleen-stomach and upon the spleen qi's ability to move or transport foods and fluids. Hence, Chinese spleen function is summed up in the two words *yun* (运, movement) and *hua* (化, transformation). Since movement implies dispersion, the concept of movement and transformation is simply an older, more traditional way of describing the digestive system's dispersion and transformation.

The analogy of the cooking pot introduced above is very important. It is said in Chinese that the stomach has an aversion to dryness (*wei e zao*, 胃恶燥). In other words, stomach function is dependent upon the creation of a mash or soup in its cauldron or pot. It is also said in Chinese that the spleen fears dampness (*pi e shi*, 脾恶湿). Since spleen function is likened to a fire under a pot distilling the essence from the mash held in the stomach, it is easy to understand that too much water or dampness can douse or damage this fire.

Using this analogy, it is both simple and crucial to understand that, according to Chinese medicine, the digestive process consists of first creating a 100° F soup in the stomach,<sup>3</sup> remembering that body temperature is 98.6° F. Whatever facilitates the creation of such a 100° soup in the stomach benefits digestion, and whatever impedes or impairs the creation of a 100° soup in the stomach impedes or impairs digestion. This is basically true even from a Western medical perspective. Most of the insights and principles of Chinese dietary theory and therapy are logical extensions of this commonsense and irrefutable truth.

## The Implications of This Process

### Cooked vs. uncooked foods

First of all, Chinese medical teachings suggest that most people, most of the time, should mostly eat cooked food. Cooking is predigestion on the outside of the body to

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<sup>3</sup> Or 38°C

make food more easily digestible on the inside. By cooking foods in a pot on the outside of the body, one can initiate and facilitate the stomach's decomposition and cooking in its pot on the inside of the body. Chilled (*leng*, 冷) and uncooked (*sheng*, 生) foods require much more energy to transform them into warm soup within the pot of the stomach. Since it takes energy or qi to create this warmth and transformation, the net profit from this transformation is less. On the other hand, if one eats cooked foods at room temperature at least or warm at best, less spleen qi is spent in the process of digestion. This means that the net profit of digestion, i.e., qi or energy, is greater.

As you may have already thought, the idea that eating cooked food is more nutritious than uncooked food flies in the face of some current schools of Western nutritional belief. Because enzymes and vitamins are destroyed by cooking, some people think it is healthier to eat mostly raw, uncooked foods. This makes apparent sense only as long as one confuses gross income with net profit. When laboratory scientists measure the relative amounts of cooked and raw foods, they are not taking into account these nutrients' post-digestive absorption. However, here let's be clear that what we are talking about cooking is primarily grains, beans, and meats. In Chinese medicine, we think that vegetables should only be lightly cooked and fruits may be eaten uncooked if desired. More specifics about cooking will be discussed later.

*Let's say that a raw carrot has 100 units of a certain vitamin or nutrient and that a cooked carrot of the same size has only 80 units of that same nutrient. At first glance, it appears that eating the raw carrot is healthier since one would, theoretically, get more of that nutrient that way. However, no one absorbs 100% of any available nutrient in a given food. Because the vitamins and enzymes of a carrot are largely locked in hard-to-digest cellulose packets, when one eats this raw carrot, they may actually only absorb 50% of the available nutrient. The rest is excreted in the feces. But when one eats the cooked carrot, because the cooking has already begun the breakdown of the cellulose walls, one may absorb 65% of the available nutrient. In this case, even though the cooked carrot had less of this nutrient to begin with, net absorption is greater. The body's economy runs on net, not gross nutrient value. It is as simple as that. [Of course, we are talking about light cooking, and not reducing everything to an overcooked, lifeless mush.]*

This is why soups and stews are so nourishing. These are the foods we feed infants and those who are recuperating from illness. The more a food is like 100° soup, the easier it

is for the body to digest and absorb its nutrients. The spleen and stomach expend less qi, and, therefore, the net gain in qi is greater. This is also why chewing food thoroughly before swallowing is so important. The more one chews, the more the food is macerated and mixed with liquids, in other words, the more it begins to look like soup or stew.

### Chilled & cold foods & liquids

As a corollary of this, if we drink or eat chilled, cold, or frozen foods or drink iced liquids with our meals, we are only impeding the warm transformation of digestion. Cold obviously negates heat, and water puts out fire. This does not mean that such food and liquids are never digested, but it does mean that often they are not digested well. In Chinese medicine, if the spleen and stomach fail to adequately transport and transform foods and liquids, a sludge tends to accumulate just as it might in an incompletely combusting automobile engine. This sludge is called stagnant food (*shi zhi*, 食滯) and dampness and turbidity (*shi zhuo*, 湿浊) in Chinese medicine. And what of the Western habit of having a cold drink with our meal? On the one hand, the coldness of chilled drinks damages the spleen, making it vacuous and weak; on the other hand, the stomach becomes hot and hyperactive trying to deal with this cold material it suddenly finds itself having to decompose and cook.

As much as the previous paragraph may make it sound that way, please note that Chinese medicine is not saying that no one should ever eat or drink chilled, cold, iced, or frozen drinks or foods. In general, Chinese medicine does not speak in such universal terms. Everything in Chinese medicine depends on the individual's constitution and environment. Some people are born with very exuberant yang qi. Such people can eat and drink more chilled and frozen things and get away with it. Others have weaker spleens and stomachs which are more easily damaged by eating and drinking chilled and frozen foods and liquids. So one's tendency to such damage is highly individual and no one size fits all.<sup>4</sup>

### Dampness & phlegm

And what happens next? If the solid portions of food are jam-packed into the stomach or their digestion is impaired by cold and chilled foods and liquids or if too many hard-to-digest foods are eaten, stagnant food may accumulate in the stomach. The stomach tries all the harder to burn these off and becomes like a car stuck in over-

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<sup>4</sup> Chinese medicine always seeks to restore balance or moderation to individual patients at specific moments in time. Therefore, there are few if any absolutes in Chinese medicine.

drive. It becomes hotter in an attempt to burn off the accumulation. This often results in the stomach becoming chronically overheated. This, in turn, causes the stomach to register hunger which, in Chinese medicine, is a sensation of the stomach's heat and emptiness. This hunger results in eating more and more and a vicious cycle is created. Overeating begets stagnant food which begets stomach heat which reinforces overeating. Does this sound familiar? It is a sad description of today's Western diet.

A similar problem affects the spleen. If the liquid portions of food and drink jam the transporting and transforming functions of the spleen, what is called the qi mechanism or *qi ji* (气机) in Chinese, these may accumulate as dampness (*shi*, 湿). This plethora of water fluids inhibits the spleen qi's warm transforming function in the same way that water inhibits or douses fire. Over time, this accumulated dampness may mix with stagnant food and congeal into phlegm (*tan*, 痰) which further gums up the entire system and retards the flow of qi and blood throughout the body.

As I said above, one person's digestion burns hotter than another's. Those with a robust constitution and strong life-gate fire tend to have a strong digestion. These people can often eat more in general and more chilled, frozen, hard-to-digest foods without seeming problems. Likewise, everyone's metabolism runs at different temperatures throughout the year. During the summer when it is hot outside, we generally can eat cooler foods and should drink more chilled liquids. However, even then, we should remember that *everything* that goes down our gullet must be turned into 100° soup before it can be digested and assimilated.

*Many Westerners are shocked to think that cold and frozen foods are inherently unhealthy since they have become such a ubiquitous part of our contemporary diet. However, chilled, cold, and frozen foods and liquids are a relatively recent phenomenon. They are dependent upon refrigeration in the marketplace, refrigeration during transportation, and refrigeration in the home. Such mass access to refrigeration is largely a post-World War II occurrence. That means that, in temperate zones, people have only had widespread access to such foods and drinks for less than 70 years. Seventy years is not even a blink on the human evolutionary scale.*

### **Post-digestive temperature**

Let me point out that in Chinese medicine an important distinction is made between



the cold physical temperature of a food or drink and a food or drink's post-digestive temperature. Post-digestive temperature refers to a particular food or drink's net effect on the body's thermostat. Some foods, even when cooked, are physiologically cool and tend to lower the body's temperature either systemically or in a certain organ or part. Chinese medicine categorizes every food as either cold, cool, level (i.e., balanced or neutral), warm, or hot. This is called the food's *nature* (*xing*, 性). Most foods are cool, level, or warm and, in general, we should mostly eat level and warm foods since our body itself is warm. Life is warm. During the winter or in colder climes, it is important to eat warmer foods, but during the summer we can and should eat cooler foods. However, this mostly refers to the post-digestive temperature of a food.

**Here is an example:** *If you eat ice cream in the summer, your body is temporarily cooled by the ingestion of such a frozen food; however, its response is to increase the heat of digestion in order to deal with this cold insult. Interestingly, it is a common custom in tropical countries to eat hot foods in hot weather since the body is then provoked to sweat as an attempt to cool itself down. In China, mung bean soup and tofu are eaten in the summer because both these foods tend to cool a person down post-digestively. If we are going to eat cold and frozen foods and drink iced, chilled liquids, it is best that these be taken between meals when they will not impede and retard the digestion of other foods.*

The table on the next page shows the post-digestion temperatures or natures of a number of commonly eaten foods and spices. You can see that most foods fall into the warm, neutral, and cool categories; far fewer are either hot or cold.

### Dampening foods

Not only do foods have an inherent post-digestive temperature, but different foods also tend to generate more or less body fluids. Therefore, in Chinese medicine all foods can be described according to how *damp* they are, meaning dampening to the human system. Because the human body is damp (we are, after all, 55-60% water), most foods are somewhat damp and that is healthy. However, some foods are excessively dampening and, since it is the spleen which combats dampness, excessively damp foods tend to interfere with the spleen's function of moving and transforming.

An appropriate amount of dampness is considered yin in that it nourishes our sub-

Hot	Warm	Neutral	Cool	Cold
Dried ginger	Chicken	Chicken egg	Whole wheat	Seaweed
Cayenne pepper	Butter	Milk	Barley	Kelp
Jalapeno pepper	Shrimp	Pork	Millet	Watermelon
Black pepper	Ham	Beef	Mung bean	Banana
White pepper	Lamb	White rice	Soybean	Tea
Sweet basil	Glutinous rice	Rye	Tofu	Salt
Soybean oil	Walnut	Duck	Swiss chard	Clam
Cottonseed oil	Sunflower seed	String beans	Sesame oil	Crab
	Dill seed	Corn	Pear	
	Fennel seed	Peas	Lemon	
	Coconut	Peanuts	Alfalfa sprouts	
	Peach	Figs	Button mushrooms	
	Cherry	Pineapple	Spinach	
	Winter squash		Buckwheat	
	Leek			
	Onion			

stance. Let's look at how this is explained by the Chinese Five Phase Theory (*wu xing xue shuo*, 五行学说). Dampness is associated with the earth phase. Fertile earth is damp. The flavor of earth according to Chinese five phase correspondence theory is sweet. Thus, by extension, the sweet flavor is believed to be inherently dampening and also nutritive. In Chinese medical terms, the sweet flavor supplements the qi (our vital force) and blood (our bodily fluids).

When you look at a Chinese medical description of various foods, you are struck by the fact that almost all foods are somewhat sweet. This makes sense since we eat to supplement our qi and blood. All grains, most vegetables, and most meats eaten by humans are sweet no matter what other of the five flavors they may also be. This sweetness in the overwhelming majority of foods we humans regularly eat becomes evident the more one chews a food. For example, thoroughly chew a slice of whole grain bread or a mouthful of rice and notice how sweetness floods your mouth.

As I said above, a modicum of sweetness supplements the body's qi and blood. It is



this flavor which gathers in the spleen and provides the spleen with its qi. However, excessive sweetness has just the opposite effect on the spleen. Instead of energizing the spleen, it overwhelms and weakens it. This is based on the Chinese idea that yang when extreme transforms into yin and vice versa. When the spleen becomes weak, it craves sweetness since that is the flavor which strengthens it when consumed in moderate amounts. However, if this craving is indulged with concentrated sweets such as sugar, this only further weakens the spleen and harms digestion. Thus, another pathological eating cycle is forged in many people. But please note that Chinese medicine does not typically speak in absolutes; whether a sweet food is good or bad for a particular person depends on that person's particular needs and weaknesses, as well as on the quantities of sweets eaten.

Let's go back to our discussion of dampness for a moment. The sweet flavor engenders dampness and the sweeter a food is the more dampening it is. According to Chinese medicine, this tendency is worsened when the sweet flavor is combined with sour. Therefore, Chinese medicine identifies a number of especially dampening foods. These include such sweet and sour foods as citrus fruits and juices and tomatoes, such concentrated sweets as sugar, molasses, and honey, and also highly nutritious foods such as wheat, dairy products, nuts, oils, and fats.

Highly nutritious foods have more flavor (*wei*, 味) than qi. In this context, qi means the light, airy, aromatic and yang part of a food, whereas *wei*, literally meaning taste, refers to a food's heavier, more substantial, more nourishing, yin aspects. All foods are a combination of qi and *wei*. Here again we see Chinese medicine's emphasis on balance. Highly nutritious foods, such as dairy products, meats, nuts, eggs, oils, and fats are strongly capable of supplementing the body's yin fluids and substances; however, in excess they generate a superabundance of body fluids which become pathologic dampness. Although this may appear to be a paradox, it has to do with healthy yin in excess becoming evil or pathological yin or dampness, phlegm and turbidity.

It is also easy to see that certain combinations are even worse than their individual constituents. Ice cream is a dietary disaster. It is too sweet, too creamy, and too cold. Ice cream is an extremely dampening food. Pizza is a combination of tomato sauce, cheese, and wheat. All of these foods tend to be dampening and this effect is made even worse if greasy additions, such as pepperoni and sausage, are added. The ubiqui-

*... we should bear in mind that we would not eat 4-6 oranges in a single sitting nor every day. Yet, when we drink a glass of orange, tomato, apple or carrot juice, that is exactly what we are doing; we are drinking the nutritive essence of not one but a large quantity of fruits or vegetables.*

tous tomato sauce of Western cooking bears a few more words: since it is the condensed nutritive substances of many tomatoes, it can be especially dampening.

In the same way, drinking fruit juices can be very dampening. Fruit and vegetable juices are another relatively modern addition to the human diet. Prior to the advent of refrigeration, juices would turn into wine or vinegar within days. Therefore, when they were available in traditional societies, they were an infrequent treat. Now we have endless access to tropical fruits and juices thanks to refrigeration and interstate and intercontinental transportation. However, we should bear in mind that we would not eat 4-6 oranges in a single sitting nor every day.

Yet, when we drink a glass of orange, tomato, apple or carrot juice, that is exactly what we are doing; we are drinking the nutritive essence of not one but a large quantity of fruits or vegetables. This over nutrition typically results in the formation of pathogenic dampness and phlegm.

Meats, because they are so nutritious, or supplement qi and blood so much, also tend to be damp in the same way. The fatter and richer a meat is, the more it tends to generate dampness within the body. Amongst the common domestic mammalian meats, pork is the dampest with beef coming in second. Therefore, it is important not to eat too much meat and especially not greasy, fatty meats. Most people do fine on two ounces of meat 3-4 times per week.

On the other hand, eating only poultry and fish is not such a good idea either. As Chinese medicine is quick to point out, everything in this world has its good and bad points. Poultry and fish tend to be less dampening and phlegmatic, it is true, but chicken, turkey, and shellfish tend to be hot. If you eat only these meats, you run the risk of becoming overheated. I have seen this happen time and again in clinical practice. From a Western scientific point of view, we can also say that eating too much fish may result in mercury accumulation and toxicity and overeating commercial chicken may result in too much estrogen and exposure to salmonella food-poisoning. Chinese medicine sees human beings as omnivores and suggests that each of us should eat widely and diversely on the food chain.

**A list of strongly fluid-engendering, i.e., dampening, foods:**

Milk	Fatty meats
Butter	Sugar, molasses, honey, corn syrup
Eggs	Most fruits
Oils and seeds in general	Wheat
Nuts in general	Buckwheat

**The Basic Healthy Diet According to Chinese Medicine**

Now that we have an understanding of the concepts, let's take a look at the basic principles of a healthy diet according to Chinese medicine.

**1. Careful harmonization of the five flavors—bringing harmony to our food choices.**

Just as foods can have any of the five natures or temperatures, food can also have any of five flavors—sweet, sour, acrid, bitter, and salty. Many foods have two or more inherent flavors. For instance, many fruits are sweet and sour, such as apples and oranges. Coffee is sweet and bitter; while, tea is bitter and sweet, while wine is sweet, bitter, and acrid. The table on the next page shows foods exemplifying the five flavors when they occur singly in a particular food.

**2. Clear, light, suitable food**

Clear, light, suitable food describes a diet which is mainly vegetarian. It is primarily comprised of grains, beans, vegetables, and fruits. Based on this injunction, one should eat only very small and infrequent quantities of meat, greasy, fatty foods, and alcohol. Li Dong-yuan of the Yuan dynasty (1280-1368 CE), in his *Pi Wei Lun (Treatise on the Spleen & Stomach)*, says that spicy, hot foods injure and damage the original qi. Li Chan of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE), in *Yi Xue Ru Men (Entering the Gate of the Study of Medicine)*, says that one should also avoid fried, roasted, toasted, fermented, pickled in soy sauce, or hot-natured foods since these dry the blood. Ge Hong of the Eastern Jin dynasty (265-420 CE) said that a clear, light diet nourishes the stomach and eating less in general relieves the intestines.

Sweet	Sour	Acrid	Bitter	Salty
White rice	Lemon	Chicken egg	Rye	Seaweed
Glutinous rice		Milk	Alfalfa sprouts	Kelp
Wheat		Pork		Crab
Barley		Beef		Mussel
Shrimp		White rice		Ham
Milk		Rye		Salt
Butter		Duck		
Chicken egg		String beans		
Chicken		Corn		
Beef		Peas		
Lamb		Peanuts		
String beans		Figs		
Corn		Pineapple		
Peas Soybeans				
Tofu				
Peanuts				
Walnut				
Figs				
Cabbage				
Carrot				

### 3. Guarding against food cravings & addictions

Balance and moderation, as we've already noted, provide the foundation for a balanced diet. Chapter 63 of the *Ling Shu* (*Miraculous Pivot*) says that only a diet comprised of all five flavors—sweet, bitter, acrid, sour, and salty—can keep the bones straight, the sinews supple, the qi and blood flowing, the pores closed, and the functioning of the five major organs or viscera coordinated and balanced harmoniously. Conversely, persistent addiction to a certain flavor will lead to its accumulation within the body and, over the course of time, will result in loss of balance of the viscera and bowels.

We see this same caution in other Chinese medical texts. Chapter 3 of the *Su Wen* (*Simple Questions*) says that too much sour causes liver qi repletion (fullness) with consequent spleen qi exhaustion. Too much salt taxes the qi of the large bones and withers

the flesh in addition to repressing heart qi. Too much sweet causes the heart qi to be full and stuffy, the facial color blackish, and the kidney qi not balanced. Too much bitter causes the spleen qi to lose its moisture and the stomach qi to become too broad or distended. And too much acrid or pungent causes the sinews to be slack and the vessels stopped up while the essence spirit (*jing shen*, 精神) or psyche suffers disaster.

In addition, guarding against partialities in food also means balancing foods of both hot and cold natures. As you remember, beyond the five flavors, each food has its own *nature*, its inherent temperature and that temperature's effect on the human body. Too much hot food damages the original qi and body fluids or yin. Too much cold food damages the spleen and stomach qi and damages the digestive ability.

#### 4. Select food suitable to treat the specific person

This principle refers to the fact that each person has an inherent or constitutional predisposition. Different schools within Chinese medicine have historically used different systems for defining various constitutional types, but here are the most common: The first is the *wood-fire* person, characterized by mesomorphic to ectomorphic body types with medium to thin builds, tight, possibly stringy, angular, strong-willed and sometimes aggressive and/or nervous. Modern Chinese medicine suggests that wood-fire types should eat more moistening foods, such as fruits and vegetables, millet, beans, and eggs. On the other hand, they should avoid hot foods such as beef and lamb.

*Phlegm-damp* people tend to be overweight or endomorphic. Their flesh is typically atonic. According to Chinese medical theory, accumulation of phlegm and dampness is primarily due to weak spleen and stomach function. Therefore, phlegm-damp people should eat more light, easily digestible food such as cooked vegetables, along with bland tasting foods which seep dampness from the body by promoting urination. They should avoid foods which tend to generate increased body fluids, things such as greasy, fatty foods, milk and milk products.

*Yin vacuity* (deficient) persons are most often people who have entered middle age. In addition, ectomorphic or very thin, nervous people may be constitutionally yin vacuous from birth. It is said in Chinese, *nian si shi, yin zi ban* (年四十，阴自半). This means that by 40 years of age, the yin qi is automatically (reduced by) half, since the process of life itself is the consumption and transformation of yin substance by yang

activity and function. People with a yin vacuity constitution, whether from birth or due to aging, should eat light foods which nourish the yin by being easy to digest and thus being easily transformed into qi and blood. If there is abundant qi and blood then, while we sleep, that surplus is transformed into yin essence. Such light, easy to digest but nonetheless yin nourishing foods include fruits, vegetables, milk, eggs, and bean products like tofu.

*Yang vacuity* (deficient) persons mostly refer to the truly elderly. As we enter the last decades of life, the life-gate fire begins to decline, metabolism slows and body warmth decreases. It is also possible for a person to be born with insufficient yang. People who are yang vacuous should eat more acrid, warm foods, such as fish, fowl, beef, lamb, ginger, and pepper. They should be careful, on the other hand, to avoid cold, raw or uncooked foods, cold drinks, and most fruits.

## 5. Set time, set amount—When and how much should we eat?

### Drink & eat according to time

In contrast to the daily reality of our stressful Western culture, practitioners of Chinese medicine believe that eating at regular, fixed times each day is best. The human body functions according to circadian rhythms which are repeated daily; therefore, it is said that having meals at fixed times can keep the body free from suffering. Basically, we should eat like a prince at breakfast, eat like a merchant at lunch, and eat like a pauper at dinner. In other words, our meals should become smaller as the day progresses and that we should not eat too soon before bed. The elderly, because their digestive function is not as strong as it once was, should eat light, easily digested meals more often throughout the day.

However, there is a caveat: even though we are advised to eat at fixed times each

*... even though we are advised to eat at fixed times each day, we should not eat if we are emotionally upset.*

day, we should not eat if we are emotionally upset. If a person eats when upset, because the ascent and descent of qi is disordered at that time, the pure will not be separated from the turbid and food stagnation is apt to occur. It is better to eat later than usual after one has calmed down rather than eating on schedule when one is upset.

### Avoid being starved or satiated but eat a suitable amount

We all have experienced both of these extremes. We don't have—or don't make—the

time to eat a proper meal but grab something on the run or, when we finally do get something to eat, we overdo it. Each extreme is unhealthy. Failure to eat when hungry or to drink when thirsty results in exhaustion of the source of qi and blood. On the other hand, excess food injures the spleen and stomach impairing digestion. Chinese medicine describes five results from overeating. These include too frequent defecation, too frequent urination, disturbed sleep, obesity, and indigestion. Throughout history, most Chinese medical practitioners have suggested that a person should stop eating when you are 70% full. This allows room for good and thorough digestion to take place.

## 6. Proper balance in cooking

Proper balance in cooking is recommended for three reasons. Firstly, it ensures the preservation of essential nutrients. Secondly, it makes food more appetizing. Because qi and blood are created out of the finest essence of food and drink and the good health of the individual is dependent upon abundant qi and blood, Chinese medicine sees maintenance of a healthy appetite as a primary concern. Cooking foods generally releases their flavor and aroma, thus stimulating the appetite. Thirdly, cooking makes foods more easily digestible and it also benefits and protects the spleen and stomach.

### Proper cooking of main foods

Chinese medicine gives us many specific and helpful guidelines about the proper cooking of our foods.

*Zhu shi* (主食) Literally means "ruling foods," but more loosely it means the main or staple foods of our diet, rice and grains. In the Chinese medical classics, food is often referred to as *shui gu* (水谷), "water and grain", which underlines the importance of grains to a healthy human diet. Equally important is the correct preparation of these grains, which includes: not throwing away their washing water; not overcooking them and not milling them too finely, thus losing their outer bran and nutrients. Interesting, isn't it, that the more enlightened tenets of contemporary Western thought are now reaching these same conclusions.

Once again, however, Chinese medicine carefully points out the exceptions to the rule. Rice and grains intended for babies, the elderly, or the infirm and chronically ill should be cooked longer and then macerated for easier digestion and absorption. For those who are infirm or have poor digestion, cooking grains with extra water for a longer

time, turning them into a gruel or congee called *shui fan* (水饭) or water rice in Chinese, is especially beneficial. There are numerous Chinese medicinal recipes using such gruel as their basis, and I have included some of them in this book.

As we have seen, Chinese medicine says that digestion is primarily the function of the spleen and stomach. The stomach is seen as a pot on a burner. The spleen provides the heat which distills and transforms the food and liquids in this pot into qi, blood, and useful body fluids. Digestion according to Chinese medicine is seen as a process of cooking and distillation. Cooking, milling, and macerating on the outside of the body makes internal digestion and absorption all the easier. However, there is a balance between overcooking and milling and thus losing useful nutrients, and cooking and milling sufficiently to enable proper assimilation and absorption. This balance does not remain the same in all persons at all times. Therefore, Chinese medical practitioners carefully advise each patient individually how much to cook and mill their foods. If a food has lots of nutrients locked in a hard-to-digest form, it is better to lose some of those nutrients through cooking and milling if what remains becomes more easily assimilated by our body.

*Vegetables should also not be overcooked. They should be eaten fresh and their skins should not be discarded unnecessarily. Here again, the issue is to cook them enough to be digestible but not so much as to destroy their flavor or nutritive value.*

### **Proper cooking of vegetables**

Vegetables should also not be overcooked. They should be eaten fresh and their skins should not be discarded unnecessarily. Here again, the issue is to cook them enough to be digestible but not so much as to destroy their flavor or nutritive value.

## **7. Balancing food in the four seasons**

One of the strong points of Chinese medical theory is its insistence that true health can only be achieved when the internal microcosm is in harmonious balance with the external macrocosm. Thus Chinese medical practitioners have long taught

that a person must use different acupuncture points, different herbs, and different foods during the different seasons in order for the part, the individual, to remain in balance with the whole, the external cosmos.

Let's look at some specific examples. During the spring, it is advised that we eat more sweet than sour food so as to nourish the spleen. This is based on five phase theory. In addition, we should not overeat. This is based on the fact that the liver is associated



with spring and rules the free and unobstructed coursing and discharge of the qi and blood. If we overeat, this blocks the free flow of qi and thus can harm the liver, causing what Chinese doctors call the pattern of liver depression qi stagnation.

In the summer, the heart is replete and the kidneys are vacuous (or relatively empty). Therefore, we should eat light, easily digestible food and shun greasy, tough, hard-to-digest food which might aggravate fire and heat within the body. Rather, eat nutritious fruits and vegetables. In the heat of the day you can partake of drinks that are by nature cold, such as mung bean soup, but should not overdrink chilled liquids which can easily damage the spleen and stomach and damage the kidneys.

In the fall, we should continue avoiding overdrinking cold drinks and eating too many uncooked, chilled foods. Because the weather is hot and dry during this season (from early August to early November), we may feel thirsty and parched; however, indulging and assuaging this thirst with chilled drinks and frozen treats only damages the spleen and stomach yang qi.

Winter is a time of storage and repair. This is a time when supplementing, highly nutritious food can and should be taken. Such supplementing foods according to Chinese dietary therapy are beef, lamb, chicken, and duck. In addition, Chinese medical practitioners have traditionally felt that drinking a little wine or alcohol during the winter is beneficial.

### **Let Me Take a Moment to Summarize These Ideas**

The traditional wisdom of Chinese dietary theory tells us that most humans should mostly eat vegetables and grains, supplemented with small amounts of everything else. We should mostly eat cooked and warm food which is not too sweet, not too greasy or oily, and not too damp. In addition, we should eat moderately and chew well. Drinking a teacup of warm water or a warm beverage with meals facilitates the formation of that 100° soup we are hoping to attain; conversely, it's best to avoid those chilled, cold, and frozen drinks and foods that too often accompany a Western meal.

Amongst the grains, rice holds an especially healthy place. Because it promotes urination, it tends to leech off excessive dampness. Other grains, in comparison, tend to produce dampness as a by-product of their being so nutritious. This ability of rice to help eliminate dampness through urination becomes more important the more other dampening foods one eats.

In general, I would emphasize that most Americans do not eat enough vegetables. It is easy to load up on breads, grains, and cereals but not as easy to eat plenty of freshly cooked vegetables. Grains, like meat and dairy products, are highly nutritious but heavy and relatively more difficult to digest. If overeaten they can cause accumulation of dampness and phlegm. In Asia, Daoists and Buddhists interested in longevity emphasized vegetables over grains and even modern Chinese books on geriatrics counsel that more vegetables should be eaten. This is good advice for us here in the West.

### **A Special Note on Flavors & Spices**

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, the purest part of foods are the five flavors. These are sweet, salty, bitter, pungent, and sour. Chinese medicine also recognizes a sixth flavor called bland. Each of the five flavors corresponds to one of the five phases and, therefore, tends to accumulate and have an inordinate effect on one of the five viscera (or major organs of Chinese medicine). Just as overeating sweet injures the spleen, overeating salt injures the kidney, overeating sour injures the liver, and overeating spicy foods injures the lungs. I know of no one who overeats bitter food. A little bitter flavor is good for the heart and stomach. In general, although most food is sweet, one should eat a modicum of all the other flavors. Overeating any one flavor will tend to cause an imbalance in the organs and tissues associated with that flavor according to five phase correspondence.

Most spices are pungent or acrid and warm to hot. These spices aid digestion when eaten in moderate amounts. As discussed above, the digestive process is like an alchemical distillation. The middle burner fire of the spleen and stomach cooks and distills foods and liquids driving off their purest parts. To have good digestion means to have a healthy digestive fire. Moderate use of acrid or pungent, warm spices aids digestion by strengthening the middle burner fire.

That is why traditional cultures found the use of pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, mace, and cloves so salutary. These spices contain a high proportion of qi to wei or flavor and so help yang qi transform and distill yin substance, dampness, and fluids. On the other hand, when eaten to excess, such spices can cause overheating of the stomach and drying out of stomach fluids, and remember, the stomach does not like to be dry. Therefore, a moderate use of such spices is good for the spleen but their overuse is bad for the stomach and lungs.

## A Return to a More Traditional Diet

What this all adds up to is a diet very similar to the Pritikin diet or Macrobiotics. Both these dietary regimes suggest that the bulk of one's diet be composed of complex carbohydrates and vegetables and that one get plenty of fiber and less animal proteins, refined sugars, oils, and fats. This is very much the traditional diet of all people living in temperate climates the world round. This is also very much like what our great grandparents ate.

One hundred years ago, most people only ate meat once or twice a week. Mostly they ate grains and vegetables. Because they did not have refrigeration, they ate mostly what was in season and what could be stored in root cellars and through pickling, salting, and drying. One hundred years ago, sugar was too expensive for most people to afford more than a tiny bit per year. Likewise, oils and fats were relatively precious commodities and were not eaten in large quantities. Those oils which were available were pressed from flax, hemp, sesame seeds, or were derived from fish oil, lard, and butter. They were not the heavily hydrogenated tropical oils which are so frequently used in commercial food preparation today.

It was also a well-known fact of life 100 years ago that rich people who ate too well and exercised too little were more prone to chronic health problems than those who lived a more Spartan and rigorous life. If you look at the cartoons of the 18th and 19th centuries, you will frequently see the overweight nobleman with the enlarged and gouty toe. Likewise, the Chinese medical classics contain numerous stories of doctors treating rich patients by getting them to do some physical work and to eat simpler, less rich food. Gerontologists today have noted the fact that those ethnic groups who tend to produce a large proportion of centenarians, such as the Georgians, the Hunzakuts, and certain peoples in the Peruvian Andes, all eat a low animal protein, low fat, high fiber diet.

*Gerontologists today have noted the fact that those ethnic groups who tend to produce a large proportion of centenarians, such as the Georgians, the Hunzakuts, and certain peoples in the Peruvian Andes, all eat a low animal protein, low fat, high fiber diet.*

If you follow the above Chinese dietary guidelines, you will eat nutritiously and well. You will be supplemented by the food you eat and not unduly harmed by it. Such a moderate, commonsense diet is one of the four foundations of good health. This diet is more or less appropriate for most people living in a temperate climate. Patients suffering from specific diseases may require various individualized modifications of the above outlined

regime. However, because, whether in sickness or health, the process of digestion is essentially the same, this is a healthy diet for the majority of people. In Chapter 5, I will discuss specific modifications for some of the most common groups of food imbalance in developed countries as described by Chinese medicine. Yet even these modifications are based on this same commonsense approach to food and eating.

## The Modern Western Diet 4



The modern Western diet<sup>1</sup> which we take so much for granted is mostly a product of post-World War II advances in technology and transportation. Until after World War II, mass refrigeration and interstate transportation did not allow for everyone to buy a half-gallon of fresh orange juice anytime of the year at an affordable price nor to keep a half gallon of ice cream (or now frozen yogurt) in their home freezer. In addition, special interest advertising has fostered erroneous ideas about the healthfulness of many of these “new” foods. We have been so bombarded by TV commercials extolling the healthful benefits of orange juice that we seldom remember that these are partisan propaganda bought and paid for by commercial growers who depend upon the sale of their product to turn a profit.

The modern Western diet is a relatively recent aberration in the history of human diet. It is an experiment which has largely run its course as more and more people as

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<sup>1</sup> What I am calling the modern Western diet in fact has become the diet of much of the developed world. Therefore, strictly speaking, it is wrong to call this phenomenon the modern Western diet. However, because Chinese themselves continually talk and write about Chinese medicine as opposed to Western, i.e., biomedicine, I have decided to retain this name. I trust readers outside the Western world will excuse this ethnocentrism.

well as governmental agencies come to the conclusion that so much of what we take for granted these days as a normal diet is really not healthy. Just as we are now realizing as a society that smoking is bad for the health, likewise we are also now coming to realize that too much sugar, fats, oils, and animal protein are also not good for the health nor conducive to longevity.

This diet that all too many living in developed countries around the world have adopted leads to being overweight at the same time as undernourished, and the connection between being overweight, cardiovascular disease (hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, coronary artery disease, peripheral vascular disease, macular degeneration, kidney disease), cerebrovascular disease (stroke), and diabetes with increased morbidity and mortality is, at this point, beyond debate. According to former U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher, obesity counts for 300,000 premature deaths per year.<sup>2</sup> Especially during the last 20 years, there has been a dramatic increase in obesity in the U.S. to the point that, in 2006, only four states had a prevalence of obesity less than 20%. Twenty-two states had a prevalence equal or greater than 25%, and two of these states (Mississippi and West Virginia) had a prevalence of obesity equal to or greater than 30%.<sup>3</sup> In 2005, approximately 119 million Americans, or 64.5%, of adult Americans are either overweight or obese.<sup>4</sup> While it is true that changes in exercise and physical activity play a part in this trend to obesity and overweight, faulty diet is a major culprit.

## Alternative Health Eating Index

The fact that the modern diet in industrialized nations is basically unhealthy has been confirmed by a recently published multi-decade study involving over 100,000 participants. Harvard researchers (spearheaded by Walter Willetts) set out to develop an Alternative Healthy Eating Index (AHEI) based on scientific evidence. The results of this study were published in 2002 and have definitely challenged the accepted wisdom of the U.S. Department of Agricultural (USDA) on what constitutes a healthy diet. This ground-breaking study looked at the diets of more than 100,000 men and women enrolled in two other major studies, the Health Professionals Follow-up Study and the Nurses' Health Study. The subjects chosen for the Harvard study filled out questionnaires that allowed the re-

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Obesity At an All-time High, <http://healthlink.mcw.edu/article/1031002183.html>, last retrieved 1/21/2008

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Obesity Trends 1985-2006, <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/trend/maps/> last retrieved 1/21/2008

<sup>4</sup> Obesity Rates Rise Throughout the U.S., <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/29645.php>, last retrieved 1/21/2008

searchers to plot what kinds of foods they were eating. The researchers came up with their AHEI by looking at dietary patterns and eating behaviors that, according to the findings of earlier studies, were associated with lower rates of chronic disease. Unlike the USDA Healthy Eating Index (HEI), the AHEI emphasizes the quality of food choices, such as white meat over red meat, whole grains over refined grains, oils high in unsaturated fat, such as many vegetable oils, over ones with saturated fat; and multivitamin use.

In the Harvard study, men whose diets most closely matched the AHEI were found to have lowered their overall risk of major chronic disease by 20%, and women by 11%, compared with those whose diets least closely followed these guidelines. In fact, the researchers found that men and women who followed the AHEI lowered their risk of cardiovascular disease by 39% and 28%, respectively.

Here are some of the high points of the diet that the researchers found to be associated with low rates of disease. The AHEI suggests eating:

- Four times as much fish and poultry as red meat.
- Five servings of vegetables daily.
- Four servings of fruit daily.
- One daily serving of nuts, or vegetable protein like soy.
- More polyunsaturated fats (mostly found in vegetable sources) than saturated fats (mostly found in animal sources).
- 15 grams of fiber from grain sources, like cereal or whole-wheat bread, each day.
- For women:  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  alcoholic drinks a day.
- For men:  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  alcoholic drinks a day.<sup>5</sup>

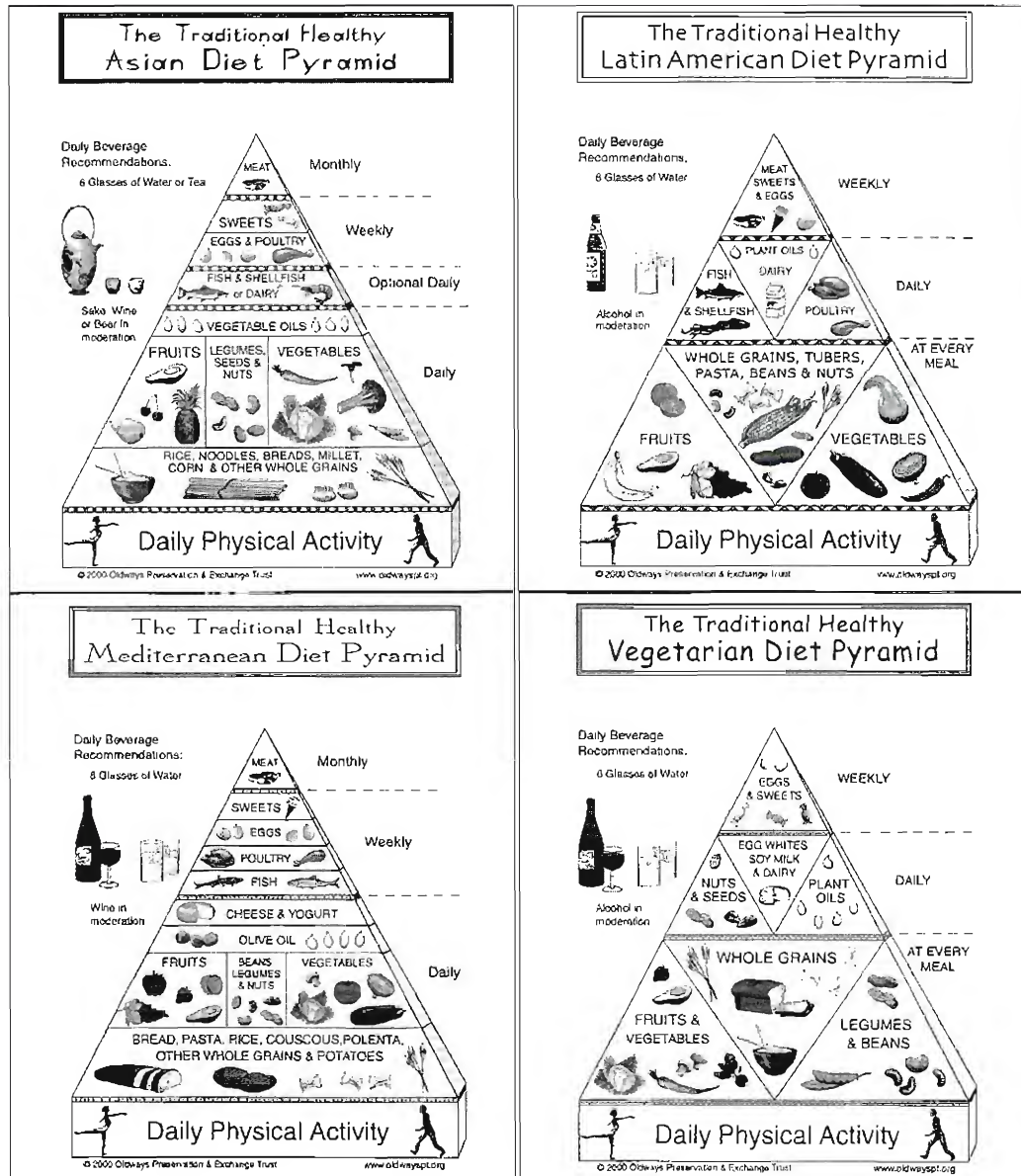
The study did not establish daily amounts for all food groups, and it did not look at exercise.

## Not One But Several Healthy Eating Food Pyramids

If one looks at the above AHEI recommendations, one will see a diet very similar to the basic healthy Chinese diet discussed in the previous chapter except for the relatively large quantity of dairy products. It is well known that many Asians lack the en-

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<sup>5</sup> Reshaping the Food Pyramid, <http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=52019>, last retrieved 1/21/2008



Jointly with the Harvard School of Public Health and other institutions, Oldways published these “healthy eating pyramids,” a set of dietary guides based on the global dietary traditions most closely associated with good health. ©2000 Oldways Preservation & Exchange Trust.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The New American Food Pyramid, [http://whyfiles.org/179food\\_pyramid/2.html](http://whyfiles.org/179food_pyramid/2.html), last retrieved 1/21/2008



zymes to digest milk products adequately. Therefore, some people have called the guidelines of the AHEI culturally biased. To meet these objections, several different food pyramids have been developed based on the traditional diets of various ethnic groups and popular lifestyle choices (viz. vegetarianism). See *figure on previous page*.

These several food pyramids highlight something which Chinese medicine has stressed for over a thousand years—different people with different body types living in different climates engaging in different lifestyles should eat different diets. No one-size-fits-all diet is good for everyone. Nevertheless, what is clear is that the overwhelming majority of people should not eat so many calories per day, so much sugar and sweets, so many refined carbohydrates, or too much oil and fat. On the plus side, they should definitely eat more fruits and vegetables. Due to excessive consumption of calorie-rich food in developed countries along with eating less foods high in phytonutrients, such as vegetables and fruits, our modern diet has led to a veritable epidemic of obesity at the same time as undernourishment. According to the American Heart Association (AHA) 2006 Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations:

You may be eating plenty of food, but your body may not be getting the nutrients it needs to be healthy. Nutrient-rich foods have vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients but are lower in calories. To get the nutrients you need, choose foods like vegetables, fruits, whole-grain products and fat-free or low-fat dairy products most often.<sup>7</sup>

## Portion Inflation

Not only are people in developing countries eating the wrong foods but we are eating simply too much. The relatively recent increase in portion sizes in the U.S. is popularly called “portion inflation.” This distortion in portion sizes began as a fast-food phenomenon. In order to attract more customers, fast food outlets increased their portion sizes so that customers would think they were getting more for their money. However, during the past 20 years, meals at home have grown just as inflated says Barry Popkin, a nutrition professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.<sup>8</sup> This increase in portion size is not just an urban myth. Research published in the American Journal

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<sup>7</sup> NutrientRich.com on the 2006 AHA Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations.  
<http://www.nutrientrich.com/blog/?cat=8>, last retrieved 1/21/2008

of Public Health in 2002 showed that cooked pasta, muffins, steaks, and bagels exceeded USDA standards by 480%, 333%, 224%, and 195%, respectively, while the largest excess over USDA standards (700%) occurred in the cookie category. The authors of this study state that, "Our data indicate that the sizes of current marketplace foods almost universally exceed the sizes of those offered in the past."<sup>9</sup> In fact, Americans

*In fact, Americans on average are eating approximately 200 more calories per day than they did during the 1970s. This has led us to become "a supersized society with no sense of sane satiation."*

on average are eating approximately 200 more calories per day than they did during the 1970s. This has led us to become "a supersized society with no sense of sane satiation."<sup>10</sup> A survey conducted at Cornell University in 2001 found that, when young adults are served larger portions of food, they are more likely to overeat. This research supports a previous study by New York University professors that proved that expanding portion size is an important factor in America's growing obesity problem. Students who consumed the largest increase in portion size from the previous week—150%—ate an average of

273 more calories per person.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, as Chinese doctors have long advised, it is extremely important for good health and long life not to overeat.

## High Fructose Corn Syrup

High fructose corn syrup (HFCS) is produced by processing corn starch to yield glucose, and then processing the glucose to produce a high percentage of fructose. The process for making HFCS out of corn was developed in the 1970s. Since then, the use of HFCS has grown rapidly from less than 3 million short tons in 1980 to almost 8 million short tons in 1995. During the late 1990s, use of sugar actually declined as it was eclipsed by HFCS. Today Americans consume more HFCS than sugar.<sup>12</sup> Today HFCS is used to sweeten jams, condiments like ketchup, and soft drinks. It is also a favorite ingredient in many so-called health foods. Consumers may think that because it contains fructose—which they associate with fruit, which is a natural food—that it is

<sup>9</sup> Portion Inflation Endangers Diets During Thanksgiving,

[http://www.ardmore.net/stories/112504/new\\_1125040003.shtml](http://www.ardmore.net/stories/112504/new_1125040003.shtml), last retrieved 1/21/2008

<sup>10</sup> Young, Lisa R. & Mestle, Marion, The Contribution of Expanding Portion Sizes to the U.S. Obesity Epidemic, <http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:7f766OEZ2yYJ:www.foodpolitics.com/pdf/thconexpport.pdf+portion+size+%2B+obesity&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=3&gl=us>, last retrieved 1/21/2008

<sup>11</sup> Inflation, <http://www.947theglobe.com/pages/1465715.php?>, last retrieved 1/21/2008

<sup>12</sup> Study Finds Portion Size Correlates to Obesity Rates,

<http://media.www.bcheights.com/media/storage/paper144/news/2001/10/21/News/Survey.Finds.Portion.Size.Correlates.To.Obesity.Rates-775339.shtml>, last retrieved 1/21/2008

healthier than sugar. A team of investigators at the USDA, led by Dr. Meira Field, has discovered that this just is not so. High fructose corn syrup contains more fructose than sugar and this fructose is more immediately available because it is not bound up in sucrose. "The medical profession thinks fructose is better for diabetics than sugar," says Dr. Field, "But every cell in the body can metabolize glucose. However, all fructose must be metabolized in the liver. The livers of the rats on the high fructose diet looked like the livers of alcoholics, plugged with fat and cirrhotic."<sup>13</sup>

Almost all nutritionists finger high fructose corn syrup consumption as a major culprit in the nation's obesity crisis. Loading high fructose corn syrup into increasingly larger portions of soda and processed food has packed more calories into us. But some health experts argue that the issue is bigger than mere calories. The theory goes like this: The body processes the fructose in high fructose corn syrup differently than it does old-fashioned cane or beet sugar which, in turn, alters the way metabolic-regulating hormones function. It also forces the liver to kick more fat out into the bloodstream. The end result is that our bodies are essentially tricked into wanting to eat more and at the same time, we are storing more fat. Unlike other types of carbohydrates made up of glucose, fructose does not stimulate the pancreas to produce insulin. Peter Havel, a nutrition researcher at U.C. Davis who studies the metabolic effects of fructose, has also shown that fructose fails to increase the production of leptin, a hormone produced by the body's fat cells. Both insulin and leptin act as signals to the brain to turn down the appetite and control body weight. And in another metabolic twist, Havel's research shows that fructose does not appear to suppress the production of ghrelin, a hormone that increases hunger and appetite.<sup>14</sup>

"One of the issues is the ease with which you can consume this stuff," says Carol Porter, director of nutrition and food services at U.C. San Francisco. "It's not that fructose itself is so bad, but they put it in so much food that you consume so much of it without knowing it." A single 12-ounce can of soda has as much as 13 teaspoons of sugar in the form of high fructose corn syrup. And because the amount of soda we drink has more

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<sup>12</sup> Forristal, Linda Joyce, *The Murky World of High Fructose Corn Sugar*, [http://www.westonaprice.org/motherlinda/corn\\_syrup.html](http://www.westonaprice.org/motherlinda/corn_syrup.html), last retrieved 1/21/2008

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Severson, Kim, *Sugar-coated, We're Drowning in High Fructose Corn Syrup. Do the Risks Go Beyond our Waistline?* <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/chronicle/archive/2004/02/18/FGS524VKMH1.DTL>, last retrieved 1/21/2008

than doubled since 1970 to about 56 gallons per person a year, so has the amount of high fructose corn syrup we take in. In 2001, we consumed almost 63 pounds of it, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.<sup>15</sup> Thus it is important to read lists of ingredients and reduce (even drastically) the amount of HFCS you are eating. As John Yudkin, M.D., Ph.D., professor emeritus at Queen Elizabeth College, London, and an expert in the health effects of sugar, succinctly states, "People should avoid it."

## Trans Fatty Acids

Yet another group of substances that has crept into our modern diet are trans fatty acids, a.k.a. trans fat. There are four kinds of fats: monounsaturated fat, polyunsaturated fat, saturated fat, and trans fat. Monounsaturated fat and polyunsaturated fat are the so-called good fats. While it is generally accepted that consumption of saturated fat, such as found in animal products, should be kept low, especially for adults, trans fat are even worse for the human system, far worse than saturated fat.

Partial hydrogenation is an industrial process used to make a perfectly good oil, such as soybean oil, into a perfectly bad oil. The process is used to make an oil more solid; provide longer shelf-life in baked products; provide longer fry-life for cooking oils, and provide a certain kind of texture or "mouth-feel." The big problem is that partially hydrogenated oil is laden with lethal trans fat.

Trans fats cause significant and serious lowering of high density lipids (HDL, the "good" cholesterol) and a significant and serious increase in low density lipids (LDL, the "bad" cholesterol). It can make the arteries more rigid and cause major clogging of arteries. It can also cause insulin resistance, thus causing or contributing to type 2 diabetes. It can also cause or contribute to other serious health problems.<sup>16</sup> According to Mary G. Enig, Ph.D., a nutritionist widely known for her research on the nutritional aspects of fats and oils, trans fatty acids may also participate in the development of cancer and the depression of the immune system.<sup>17</sup>

Based on research showing the deleterious effects of ingesting trans fats, on June 7, 2007, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), a regional arm of the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO), called for the elimination of industrial

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> About Trans Fat, <http://www.bantransfats.com/abouttransfat.html>, last retrieved 1/21/2008

trans fats from food supplies throughout the Americas in order to prevent heart attacks. Citing "conclusive evidence" that consuming trans fats increases the risk of heart disease and possibly the risk of sudden cardiac death and diabetes, nutrition and public health experts convened by PAHO said reducing such consumption by just 2-4% of total calories would prevent an estimated 30,000-225,000 heart attacks in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>18</sup> In their report, the PAHO task force suggested several measures to speed up the process of eliminating trans fats from food in the Americas, including eliminating industrial trans fat from food supplies and promoting unsaturated fats as an alternative. It also recommended that governments consider mandatory labeling of trans fat content in foods, and that public health advocates work with industry to speed the phasing out of trans fats and to promote healthier oils and fats in foods. Therefore, I also highly recommend cutting down or, better yet, eliminating trans fats from your diet.

### Textured Soy Protein

Although there has been a great deal of enthusiasm for soy as a health food in recent years, there is a big difference between soybean sprouts, miso, tofu, and tempeh and textured soy protein. For years, the soy protein left over from soy-oil extraction went to animals and poultry. Now that food scientists have discovered inexpensive ways to improve or disguise the color, flavor, "bite," and "mouth-feel" of soy protein-based products, soy is being aggressively marketed as a "people feed." Although the newer refining techniques yield blander, purer soy proteins than the "beany," hard-to-cover-up flavors of the past, the main reason that soy foods now taste and look better is the lavish use of unhealthy additives such as sugar and other sweeteners, salt, artificial flavorings, colors, and monosodium glutamate (MSG). So now soy lurks in nearly 60% of the foods sold in supermarkets and natural food stores. Much of this is "hidden" in products where it wouldn't ordinarily be expected, such as fast-food burgers and Bumblebee canned tuna. Soy is also a key ingredient in ersatz products with names like Soysage,

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<sup>17</sup> Passwater, Richard A., Health Risks from Processed Foods and Trans Fats. <http://www.healthy.net/asp/templates/Inter-view.asp?Id=162>, last retrieved 1/21/2008

<sup>18</sup> "UN Health Agency calls for Trans Fat-free Americas," <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=22823&Cr=food&Cr1=>, last retrieved, 1/21/2008

Not Dogs, Fakin Bakin, , and TofuRella, which have been named after and made to look like the familiar meat and dairy products they are intended to replace.<sup>19</sup>

However, it is not at all clear that eating all this soy, especially in the form of textured soy protein is actually healthy. There is nothing natural about these modern soy protein products. Textured soy protein, for example, is made by forcing defatted soy flour through a machine called an extruder under conditions of such extreme heat and pressure that the very structure of the soy protein is changed. Scientists who have studied the use of soy protein in animal feeds over the years have discovered a number of components in soy that cause poor growth, digestive distress, and other health problems. While proponents of textured soy protein say that these potentially unhealthy proteins are eliminated by cooking and processing, they are not all eliminated. In addition, soy is one of the top eight allergens that cause immediate hypersensitivity reactions such as coughing, sneezing, runny nose, hives, diarrhea, difficulty swallowing, and anaphylactic shock. Delayed allergic responses are even more common and occur anywhere from several hours to several days after the food is eaten. These have been linked to sleep disturbances, bedwetting, sinus and ear infections, crankiness, joint pain, chronic fatigue, gastrointestinal woes, and other mysterious symptoms. Soy allergies are on the rise for three reasons: the growing use of soy infant formula (now 20-25% of the formula market), the increase in soy-containing foods in grocery stores, and the possibility of the greater allergenicity of genetically modified soybeans.<sup>20</sup> Hence I believe that health-conscious consumers should also limit their intake of textured soy protein. According to Daniel M. Sheehan, formerly senior toxicologist with the FDA's National Center for Toxicological Research, the inclusion of so much textured soy protein in the modern Western diet amounts to what he has called a "large, uncontrolled and basically unmonitored human experiment."<sup>21</sup>

## Pesticides, Preservatives & Chemicals

In the past, Chinese medicine said nothing about pesticides, preservatives, and chemical additives because these things were not known until relatively recently. However, poisoning is a Chinese medical cause of disease listed in the *bu nei bu wai yin* (不内不外因) category of neither internal nor external etiologies. All the evidence suggests that eating

<sup>19</sup> Daniel, Kaayla T., *Whole Soy Story: The Dark Side of America's Favorite Health Food*, <http://www.quantumbalancing.com/news/soy%20dangers.htm>, last retrieved 1/21/2008

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

food which is contaminated by pesticides, preservatives, and chemical dyes and additives is also not good for long-term health and well being. There are more than 1,055 active ingredients registered as pesticides, which are formulated into thousands of pesticide products that are available in the marketplace.<sup>22</sup> Research has shown that pesticides can disrupt the endocrine system (*i.e.*, one's hormones) as well as cause cancer.<sup>23</sup> In addition, certain combinations of pesticides have been shown to cause Parkinson's disease.<sup>24</sup> While food preservatives are necessary in commercially processed and packaged food, they can have a number of documented adverse effects on human health. The following is a list of commonly used food preservatives and the health concerns associated with them.

**Aspartame:** A chemical in artificial sweeteners, aspartame is known to be poisonous even in modest amounts. It can cause brain damage, blindness, inflammation of the pancreas and heart muscles.

**Calcium propionate:** Claims exist of a link between the food preservative, calcium propionate, and behavioral problems in children.

**Carbamate:** There are measurable detrimental effects on the nervous, immune and endocrine (hormone) systems.

**FD&C green no.3 fast green:** This is known to cause bladder tumors.

**Food coloring:** Colorings can cause anaphylactic shock in sensitive individuals.

**Gentian violet CI basic violet no.3:** This can cause contact dermatitis.

**Hydrolyzed p:** Fatty acids contain higher parameters for heart disease. Known to cause celiac disease (also known as celiac sprue or gluten-sensitive enteropathy) a chronic disease in which malabsorption of nutrients is caused by a characteristic lesion of the small intestine mucosa.

**Monosodium glutamate (MSG):** Some people report symptoms such as dizzi-

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<sup>22</sup> Assessing Health Risks from Pesticides, <http://www.epa.gov/opp00001/factsheets/riskassess.htm>, last retrieved 1/21/2008

<sup>23</sup> Pesticides Impact on Human Health, <http://www.pmac.net/humanimp.htm>, last retrieved 1/21/2008

<sup>24</sup> Pesticides in Disease, [http://www.pmac.net/pest\\_dis.html](http://www.pmac.net/pest_dis.html), last retrieved 1/21/2008

ness, flushing, nausea and a feeling of tightness or pressure in the upper part of the body after eating food containing MSG.

**Pectin:** Large quantities may cause temporary flatulence or intestinal discomfort.

**Potassium bromate:** Large quantities can cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, pain.

**Sodium aluminum silicate:** This is known to cause placental problems in pregnancy and has been linked to Alzheimer's.

**Sorbitol:** This can cause gastric disturbance.

**Sulfites:** The symptom most reported is difficulty breathing. Other problems range from stomachache to hives to anaphylactic shock.

**Thiamine:** Adverse effects in high doses are headache, irritability, rapid pulse, trembling and weakness.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, it is advisable to eat food which is as free from these contaminants and additives as possible; that means organic produce and grains and organically grown meat. Happily, organically grown grains, fruits, and vegetables are increasingly more common and available along with "free-range" eggs.

What this all means is that the overly processed and adulterated foods that make up such a large part of the diet in developed countries are a recipe for ill health. There simply is no substitute for freshly bought and prepared foods. One simply cannot primarily eat commercially processed, restaurant, and fast foods and remain healthy and well over the long haul. With health care costs rising at astronomical rates in part due to the pandemic in noninfectious chronic diseases associated with faulty diet, I believe those who value their and their family's health, must return to more cleaner, more organic sources of food, a more traditional diet, and more traditional methods of food preparation in the home.

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<sup>25</sup> Chen, Vincent, Information on Food Additives and Preservatives, [http://www.nutricraze.com/Article\\_about\\_Information-on-food-additives-and-preservatives-a-2403.html](http://www.nutricraze.com/Article_about_Information-on-food-additives-and-preservatives-a-2403.html), last retrieved 1/21/2008





Previously we have seen what Chinese doctors have believed is the basis of the healthy human diet for the majority of people living in a temperate environment. However, when a person becomes actively diseased, this diet is commonly altered in order to remedially treat that disease. In this case, there are three basic principles of Chinese dietary therapy for the remedial treatment of disease which has already arisen.

### **1. Treatment should primarily be based on pattern discrimination (*bian zheng lun zhi*, 辨证论治)**

The first of these principles is to select foods which correspond to the patient's pattern (*zheng*, 证). The hallmark of contemporary, professional Chinese medicine as a style is that it primarily bases its treatment on the person's presenting pattern(s) rather than on their disease.<sup>1</sup> A disease (*bing*, 病) is usually defined by a relatively

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<sup>1</sup> When I refer to Chinese medicine (*zhong yi*, 中医), I am speaking of the national standard of care (SOC) for professionally practiced Chinese medicine in the People's Republic of China (PRC) today. While there are many idiosyncratic family, regional, and national styles of Oriental medicine (*dong yi*, 东医) as well as Western schools of so-called Oriental medicine, I am talking about that style of Chinese medicine which has become the national standard in China and which forms the basis of the curriculum of study at all provincial and major metropolitan colleges and universities of Chinese medicine in the PRC. For instance, Macrobiotics is part of generic Oriental medicine, but it is not standard professional Chinese medicine. Similarly, English Five Element Acupuncture may be based on certain parts of Chinese medical theory but it is definitely not standard professional Chinese medicine.

small group of signs and symptoms.<sup>2</sup> For instance, you cannot be diagnosed as having a headache if you do not have any pain in your head. However, different people may all be diagnosed as suffering from headache, but those different people may each suffer from a different type and severity of pain in different locations of their head. Further, they may be fat or thin, male or female, old or young, and have any number of other, unique, individualized complaints. A Chinese medicine pattern is the entire constellation of all a person's signs and symptoms and not just those that add up to their disease diagnosis.

Thus, it is said in Chinese medicine:

Different diseases, same treatment;

Same disease, different treatments.

(*Yi bing, tong zhi* 异病同治; *Tong bing, yi zhi* 同病异治)

This means that if two patients both suffer from the same disease but exhibit different patterns of overall signs and symptoms, they will receive different Chinese medicine treatments; while two patients with different disease diagnoses may receive the same treatment if their Chinese medicine pattern is the same. Therefore, we can say that treatment in Chinese medicine is aimed at remedying patterns and not diseases. In Chinese medicine, disease is seen as an imbalance. This imbalance may be between the various types of qi in the body, between the viscera and bowels, or between the various types of body fluids. The name of every Chinese medicine pattern is a description of how that person is out of balance. If a person is described as exhibiting a spleen qi vacuity weakness, this means that their spleen is not functioning up to par. The treatment principles necessary to correct that imbalance and restore the person to health are to fortify the spleen and supplement or boost the qi. In this case, the Chinese doctor knows that anything which accomplishes these two goals will be good for the patient, but anything which damages the spleen or weakens the qi further will make them worse.

In terms of remedial Chinese dietary therapy, this means that foods are selected on the basis of whether they help or hinder the restoration of the patient's overall pattern to a state of balance or health. Those which promote a movement back to balance should be eaten and those which aggravate the person's imbalance should be

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<sup>2</sup> Technically, these are called the disease's pathognomonic signs and symptoms

avoided. Thus the *Nei Jing (Inner Classic)*, the premier classic of Chinese medicine says, if there is heat, cool it; if there is cold, warm it; if there is dryness, moisten it; if there is dampness, dry it; if there is vacuity, supplement it; and if there is repletion (i.e., excess or fullness), drain it. Based on this saying, if one has a hot pattern, one should eat cool or cold, heat-clearing foods. But if one has a cold pattern, one should eat some warm or hot, warming foods.

## 2. No matter what, protect and promote the spleen and stomach

Even though the basic methodology of treatment of Chinese medicine is to administer an “equal opposite” stimulus to bring the person back to balance, no matter what the disease or illness, the process of digestion remains the same. Therefore, the overall requirements for diet also remain the same. Because of the interrelationships between the various viscera and bowels, qi and blood, blood and body fluids, and yin and yang, and because of the pivotal nature of the middle burner or spleen and stomach in the creation and functioning of all of these, adherence to a basic clear, bland, spleen-fortifying diet benefits essentially all conditions.

In other words, one must always be careful when treating any disease with Chinese dietary therapy. Although cold foods are good for a hot disease pattern, one should not eat too many cold and cooling foods. If one does, rather than curing the hot disease pattern, one may only complicate their condition by damaging their spleen and stomach, the source of creation of the healthy or righteous qi which fights disease.

If we have a hot pattern, we certainly do not want to eat any hot foods, but we also need to be careful not to eat too many cold and cooling ones. A few carefully selected cold foods which are known to effectively treat the disease at hand in an otherwise level or neutral to slightly warm diet are usually “what the doctor ordered.”

Therefore, it is very important to understand that principle number two modifies and moderates principle number one when it comes to remedial Chinese dietary therapy. No matter what the disease, we must protect the spleen and stomach. This is the key to maintaining health and to treating disease. I can't emphasize this too much.

*No matter what the disease, we must protect the spleen and stomach. This is the key to maintaining health and to treating disease.*

### 3. Avoid prohibited foods

In Chinese dietary therapy, there are certain foods which are prohibited or contraindicated for certain conditions. For instance, slippery, "glossy" foods, such as honey and spinach are contraindicated in cases of slippery, sliding conditions like diarrhea and spermatorrhea. There is also a whole class of foods which are called *fa wu* (发物) in Chinese. The word *fa* (发) means to emit or effuse. *Wu* (物) means a material or substance. Therefore, *fa wu* foods are those which tend to emit or effuse the yang (i.e., hot, active) qi. In the case of most red-colored skin rashes (which are due to heat), yang qi is already erroneously located and congested in the exterior of the body. Hence, if one then eats a *fa wu* food, this will only add more yang qi to this heat already congested in the exterior or surface of the body and thus make the skin rash worse. Therefore, *fa wu* foods are prohibited for people who have various types of red skin rashes, such as hives, eczema, psoriasis, and neurodermatitis.

What are some *fa wu* foods? Chicken, shrimp, lobster, clams, mussels, and peanuts are some of the most important and commonly eaten ones. These are foods which are typically hot in nature and supplement liver-kidney yang. Or they are foods which are warm and also dampening and, thus, aggravate damp heat. In any case, one should avoid such *fa wu* foods if they have a hot skin rash. Interestingly, such *fa wu* foods are those which Western medicine considers particularly allergenic.

One should also avoid certain foods when taking certain Chinese herbal medicinals. For instance, it is prohibited to drink green or black tea or eat radishes when taking Radix Panacis Ginseng (*Ren Shen*) or to eat fish and crab when taking Herba Schizonepetae Tenuifoliae (*Jing Jie*). Likewise, eating pork is prohibited when taking Rhizoma Coptidis (*Huang Lian*), Radix Platycodi (*Jie Geng*), and/or Fructus Mume (*Wu Mei*). Additionally, it is prohibited to eat sour foods when suffering from a liver disease, bitter foods when suffering from a lung disease, salty foods when suffering from either a heart or kidney disease, and sweet and sour foods when suffering from a spleen and stomach disease. However, here we are talking about the Chinese organs of these names, not their biomedical counterparts.

As the lay reader can see, Chinese dietary therapy can get pretty technical and complicated pretty quickly. Therefore, it is always best to check specific remedial dietary recommendations with a professional practitioner of Chinese medicine. Nonetheless, there are some general recommendations that can be made regarding the appropri-

ate Chinese dietary therapy for some of the most commonly encountered patterns of imbalance. These are spleen vacuity with dampness or damp encumbrance, liver depression with stomach heat, kidney yin vacuity, and damp heat.

## Spleen Vacuity with Damp Encumbrance

The spleen may become vacuous or weak due to overfatigue, excessive worry, or overeating sweets and chilled, uncooked foods and drinks. When the spleen becomes weak, its functions of moving and transforming the products of digestion may become impaired. Typically, this results in fluids accumulating in the spleen which are then referred to as pathologic or evil dampness. Once this evil dampness has accumulated in the spleen, it further impairs spleen yang or digestive fire and a vicious circle forms. The spleen is too weak to distill and evaporate or move and transform this dampness away and this dampness keeps the spleen from recuperating its strength or qi. This is a commonly encountered problem in clinical practice. Often spleen weakness and dampness begin in infancy with inappropriately scheduled feeding and poor choices in foods for the immature newborn. Spleen weakness and dampness are especially prevalent amongst Westerners. This is because of our current lack of wisdom regarding the feeding of newborns and infants, our sweet tooth, our overconsumption of fats and oils, our use of wheat as our staple grain (which tends to be damp and cool), our fondness for raw, cold, and damp foods in general, too much thinking and worrying, and too little physical exercise. All these factors contribute to the prevalence of spleen weakness and dampness in the West.

Because of the pivotal and absolutely crucial importance of spleen and stomach or middle burner function to the health and well-being of the entire organism, such spleen weakness and dampness may cause or complicate innumerable diseases.

If one has been diagnosed by a professional practitioner of Chinese medicine as having a weak and/or damp spleen, one should avoid concentrated sweets such as sugar, honey, molasses, and maple syrup. Although some sweets are warm, such as barley malt, and, therefore, not as deleterious to the spleen as, say, white sugar which is cool, still any concentrated sugar can overwhelm the spleen and generate excessive fluids and dampness.

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One should also minimize their consumption of chilled (*leng*, 冷) foods. This means foods and drinks which are chilled or frozen. If a food or drink has been stored in the refrigerator, it should be heated up to at least room temperature before being consumed. Person's suffering from spleen weakness and dampness should especially not eat such chilled foods with other foods which would only impair their digestion and absorption. Cold foods also mean energetically cool and cold-natured foods. For instance, lettuce, celery, cucumbers, watermelon, mung beans, buckwheat, seaweed, mango, millet, pears, persimmon, spinach, tomatoes, and wheat are all cool or cold in nature or post-digestive temperature, and overconsumption of these foods can chill or damage the middle burner or spleen yang. If these foods are eaten raw (*sheng*, 生) or chilled, this further worsens their cooling effect. Thus Chinese doctors often counsel our patients not to consume too many *sheng leng* (uncooked and chilled) foods and drinks.

One should also avoid eating dampening foods and drinking too many liquids with meals. Dampening foods include milk and dairy products, citrus fruits and juices, pineapple juice, tomatoes, sugar and sweets, and fatty, greasy, oily foods. Some persons suffering from spleen dampness may experience constant thirst and may crave liquids. However, this seeming paradox is important to understand. Since fluids are not being transported from the middle burner to the rest of the body in order to moisten and nourish them, these parts of the body may experience thirst or dryness. Yet the more one drinks and floods the spleen with further dampness, the worse and more deeply entrenched this condition becomes. Patients with this diagnosis need to consume less liquids and especially not with meals. At first, their thirst and craving for fluids will increase, but, as the body becomes starved for fluids, the spleen will be forced to give up those that are "water-logging" it. Typically, the body's wisdom recognizes what must be done and where to get the liquids it needs within 2-3 days.

*...people with spleen weakness and dampness should eat a lot of cooked vegetables, cooked rice, small amounts of relatively dry animal protein, such as chicken, turkey, and white fish, and a modicum of preferably cooked fruits.*

What all this means from the positive point of view is that people with spleen weakness and dampness should eat a lot of cooked vegetables, cooked rice, small amounts of relatively dry animal protein, such as chicken, turkey, and white fish, and a modicum of preferably cooked fruits. In addition, they should use a moderate amount of drying and warming, spleen-strengthening spices and seasonings, such as cardamom, black pepper, ginger (both dry and fresh), cinnamon, and nutmeg. They should

eat foods which are light and easy to digest. They should eat soups and stews. And they should chew their food thoroughly. In addition, their practitioners may suggest taking digestive enzymes with meals to supplement their spleen and stomach.

## **Liver Depression with Simultaneous Stomach Heat**

This is another extremely common pattern of imbalance in the West. Liver depression means stagnation of the qi due to the liver's being jammed up and not freely flowing. This is mostly due to emotional stress, what in Chinese is called internal injury due to the seven passions. The Chinese liver is in charge of spreading the qi and maintaining its free flow or patency. Any kind of emotional stress can cause stagnation of liver qi but especially anger and frustration or a feeling of being stuck, trapped, or held back. Although liver depression and qi stagnation are primarily due to mental/emotional causes, they are complicated by certain dietary factors. The free flow of spleen and stomach qi is dependent in part on the free flow of liver qi. If one overeats and develops food stagnation in the stomach and intestines, this will impede the free flow of spleen-stomach qi which will, in turn, negatively affect liver qi.

Therefore, those with liver qi stagnation should be careful not to overeat or stuff themselves full of heavy, hard-to-digest foods. In other words, one should not eat a lot of nuts, nut butters, bread, and meat. When the liver becomes stuck, it also becomes full of qi. Since qi is warm, liver stagnation often becomes hot as well. This is called transformative heat (*hua re*, 化热) or depressive heat (*yu re*, 郁热). Therefore, it is also important not to eat too many hot-natured foods if one's liver tends to be stuck or stagnant. This includes hot, spicy, pungent, and acrid foods. Often people with liver depression and binding crave such spicy, acrid, warm and hot foods since they are qi stimulants and, at least temporarily, resolve the feeling of depression and binding. However, if the liver is not only stuck but hot, such hot, spicy foods will cause this heat to flare up even more, thus complicating this scenario. Rather, it is better to increase one's exercise, go to funny movies, practice daily deep relaxation, and attempt to solve those problems in one's life that make one feel stuck and frustrated.

Because the liver and the stomach both get their warmth from the life-gate fire, if one of these becomes overheated, the other also typically becomes inflamed. This means that liver depression-depressive heat are often coupled with a hot stomach as well. Because the liver and gallbladder are a yin-yang pair, if the liver becomes stuck

and overheated, the gallbladder can likewise become unhealthily hot. And all this may be compounded by a damp, weak spleen. In such cases, it is important to avoid alcohol, coffee, greasy, oily foods, and fatty meats. Although one may have an excessive appetite and crave chilled foods and drinks, one needs to exercise some care. If one is truly excess and has a robust spleen but a hot liver and stomach, one's Chinese medicine practitioner may advise eating some cold foods, such as raw lettuce, celery, spinach, tofu, soybean sprouts, mung bean sprouts, radishes, coriander, etc. However, that does not mean that these should be overeaten. The middle burner is still the middle burner. One should eat even more freshly cooked vegetables, and especially dark, leafy greens, but one should not go overboard eating all cold, raw foods.

According to the *Nei Jing (Inner Classic)*, in cases of liver disease, one should first treat the spleen since, according to five phase theory, the spleen will next be affected if it isn't already. A strong, healthy spleen can do a great deal to keep a full, hot liver in check. Therefore, one should follow the general guidelines for supplementing and disinhibiting the spleen in combination with a modicum of cool and cold foods and medicinals which specifically enter or gather in the liver, gallbladder, and stomach.

Often people with a chronically full and stagnant liver will want to know about the do's and don'ts of diet in great detail. They will gravitate towards lists and stringent and exact guidelines detailing every aspect of what they put in their mouths. This tendency is a symptom of this imbalance. Person's with this complaint should recognize this and try to relax more. Ultimately, liver depression and qi stagnation are emotional issues which need to be addressed primarily on that level. If one with such an imbalance becomes fixated on diet, they miss the point of their diagnosis, for in the end, the key piece of advice to such persons is to kick back and relax.

## **Kidney Yin Vacuity**

Life in the developed/developing world is extremely fast-paced. We are flooded with stimuli, are constantly on the go, and we tend to burn our candles from both ends. Due to "sex, drugs, and rock n' roll," many of us have prodigally burnt through our yin substance and essence. Since the Chinese kidneys are the repository of true or righteous yin and essence, this leads to their weakness and insufficiency. In Chinese medicine, the aging process is exactly equivalent to the weakening and decline of the kidneys. We can say we are as old as our kidneys are. As one ages, one inevitably consumes yin. Thus one becomes



dry and wrinkled, stooped and bent, one's hair goes gray or falls out, one's teeth fall, one's vision and hearing become dim, one's sexual capacity declines, and one's mental brilliance begins to fade. Chinese medicine attributes all this to kidney weakness and vacuity.

As we have seen, the spleen and stomach get the source of their heat from kidney yang or the life-gate fire. Conversely, the essential substances and nutrients digested by the spleen and stomach are transformed into yin essence which then shore up and bolster the kidneys. In addition, the *Nei Jing* (Inner Classic) says that the *yang ming* (阳明) or stomach and intestinal function begins to decline at around 35, before the kidneys begin their decline.

One of the reasons why many Westerners are prematurely yin empty is that our diet is typically so unsupportive of the spleen and stomach, and the main way to supplement kidney yin dietarily is through strengthening and disinhibiting the spleen. If the spleen is strong and capable of upbearing the clear and downbearing the turbid, an excess of qi and blood is made each day which is converted into essence to be stored in the kidneys when we sleep. Therefore, people with kidney yin vacuity emptiness should, once again, eat the basic middle burner benefitting diet described above.

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In addition, such patients can and should eat a bit more meat and animal proteins than others. Most of the foods which Chinese dietary theory identifies as directly supplementing kidney yin are animal meats and organs. This is because we are talking about yin substance which in the human is one's organs, meat, and flesh. Animal meats and organs are made from the same molecules and constituents as our own body, our own substance. Therefore, such animal foods are the most direct way to get the building blocks and constituents of this yin essence.

Chinese eat all sorts of fish and game that most Westerners do not.<sup>3</sup> Sea slugs, jellyfish, abalone, mussels, clams, testicles, kidneys, hearts, livers, brains, all sorts of eggs, turtles, and all the other fleshy exotica of Chinese cuisine are, from a Chinese medical point of view, eaten because they are kidney yin and essence supplements. However, Chinese doctors also say that these foods should not be overeaten. Because they are

<sup>3</sup> Tibetans, who are not ethnically Chinese, joke about the Chinese eating every four-footed thing under the sun except the table.

so nutritious (i.e., have so much *wei* or “flavor” as compared to *qi*), they are also dampening, greasy, and hard-to-digest.

Again, the issue is a modicum or moderate amount of these—more perhaps than someone who is not yin empty but not so much as to complicate one’s condition with a lot of phlegm and dampness. Although lay readers may find it hard at first to understand how a person could be yin vacuous and also damp and phlegmatic (though both are yin, one is righteous and the other is pathologic), many Westerners are just that. It is not uncommon in clinical practice to find persons who are damp, phlegmatic, and obese “on the outside” who are parched and dry on the inside. From a Chinese medical point of view, the words “inside” and “outside” are not exactly correct, but hopefully one gets the general picture. For these people, sticking to the basic spleen-stomach diet outlined above is their best possible course of action. They should depend upon the connection between the middle burner and the kidneys and the fact that healthy digestion will automatically result in shoring up depleted yin. This was Li Dong-yuan’s approach to treating yin vacuity, and Li Dong-yuan was one of the four great masters of internal medicine of the Jin-Yuan dynasties (1280-1368 CE), the renaissance of Chinese medicine.

*Therefore, persons with kidney yin vacuity and insufficiency should avoid sugars and sweets, alcohol, coffee, and other stimulants and the excessive use of dry, acrid, and warm-hot spices.*

Therefore, persons with kidney yin vacuity and insufficiency should avoid sugars and sweets, alcohol, coffee, and other stimulants and the excessive use of dry, acrid, and warm-hot spices. Rather, such a person should eat plenty of warm, easy-to-digest soups and stews, lots of cooked vegetables and grains, and a bit more animal protein than someone else might. As long as a person does not suffer from dampness and phlegm complicating their vacuity and insufficiency, one can eat relatively more wheat and oats which tend to have a moistening, fluid-engendering, and calming effect.

## Damp Heat

The fourth pattern of imbalance which I see most often in clinical practice are various types of damp heat. Most often, the dampness is due to faulty spleen-stomach function. Due to faulty diet, worry, and overfatigue, the spleen fails to move and transform liquids as it should. These, being turbid and heavy, have a tendency to seep downwards and collect in the lower part of the body. This dampness impedes the flow of *qi* wherever it collects. The *qi* backs up behind the puddled and pooled dampness and, because *qi* is

inherently warm, the area becomes overheated. This heat then becomes tied up or bound with the dampness and becomes what is called in Chinese medicine damp heat.

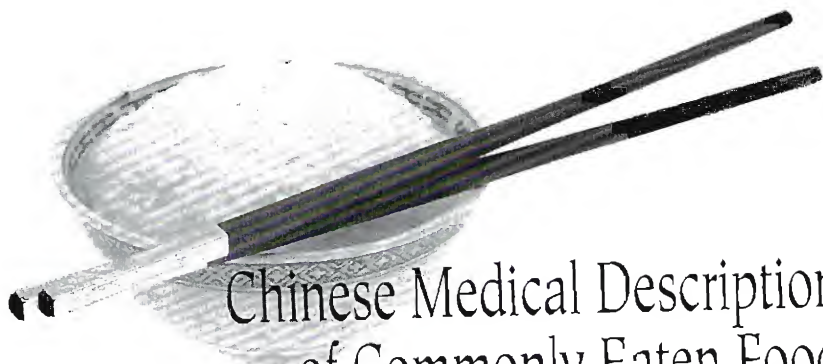
Technically, this heat may be either replete (*shi* 实, full), depressive, or vacuity (*xu* 虚, empty) heat, but, once it joins with dampness, it is damp heat nonetheless. Damp heat may manifest as problems with the liver-gallbladder or various inflammatory conditions of the intestines, bladder, and reproductive organs. It can also cause various dermatological or skin diseases. Once damp heat gets established in the lower part of the body, it can be difficult to rid. This is due to dampness' heaviness and turbidity. Chinese medicine says dampness is recalcitrant to treatment. In addition, a certain amount of damp heat typically accumulates as one ages.

Since dampness mostly has its source in the middle burner, once again a commonsense, middle burner, spleen-stomach benefitting diet is important to correct the generation of dampness at its source. Even if the heat in damp heat is vacuity heat, such an approach will still benefit the situation. In addition, persons with damp heat in the lower burner or lower half of their body should eat somewhat more cooling, diuretic foods. These include Chinese barley or Job's tears, watermelon and other summer melons, watercress, celery, carrots, cranberries, and cucumbers. However, except for the melons and cranberries, these should all be eaten lightly cooked. Because rice is mildly diuretic, it should be the staple grain for those suffering from damp heat in the lower burner. Sweets, chocolate, nuts, ice cream, frozen yogurt, alcohol, greasy, oily, and fatty foods should be avoided. Chinese dietary theory holds that oils and alcohol are especially productive of dampness and heat.

In my experience as a teacher, relatively "young" or new students of Chinese medicine tend to be fascinated by all the exotica. There are any number of Chinese dietary books written in Chinese that give Chinese recipes for various health conditions, and it can be fun eating day-lily flower because Chinese medicine says these are good for sorrow or turtle and asparagus soup for damp heat and liver-kidney vacuity emptiness. But after more than 30 years studying, eating, and prescribing Chinese foods according to Chinese dietary theory and therapy, I have come to the conclusion that most people do best if they stick to what I have called a basic middle burner, spleen-benefitting diet: warm food cooked

*...after more than 30 years studying, eating, and prescribing Chinese foods according to Chinese dietary theory and therapy, I have come to the conclusion that most people do best if they stick to what I have called a basic middle burner, spleen-benefitting diet...*

fresh and eaten warm, lots of fresh vegetables, lots of grains, some beans, a little animal protein of all sorts and varieties, a moderate consumption of fruits, seeds, and nuts, not much concentrated sweets, oils, or fats, and plenty of fiber. Professional practitioners or other readers interested in the technical Chinese medicine descriptions of specific foods will find these in the rear of this book. However, let me reiterate one more time, I believe it is more important to understand the basic wisdom of Chinese dietary theory than get lost in a sea of technical details and Oriental exotica.



## Chinese Medical Descriptions of Commonly Eaten Foods 6

**B**elow are the Chinese medical descriptions of more than 150 commonly eaten foods. These descriptions are all taken from Chinese sources. However, they are also all foods which are found and eaten in the West. They are found in either grocery stores, health food stores, Asian specialty food shops, or in a few instances, in your backyard. The categories of information under each food are flavor, nature or temperature, channel entering, functions or actions, and indications.

In Chinese medicine, there are six flavors: sweet, salty, sour, acrid, bitter, and bland. The flavors of each food are based on direct sensory experience, and many if not most foods are combinations of more than a single flavor. Of these six flavors, five correspond with five phase theory and each "enters" one of the five main viscera of Chinese medicine. Sweet enters the spleen. Sour enters the liver. Bitter enters the heart. Acrid enters the lungs. And salty enters the kidneys. In small amounts, these flavors benefit these viscera but, in large amounts, they actually damage them. In addition, each of the six flavors tends to have certain effects on the body. The sweet flavor boosts the qi and engenders fluids. The bitter flavor tends to astringe and dry as well as lead the qi downward. The sour flavor also astringes and constrains. The acrid flavor leads the qi upward and outward and tends to also be drying, while the salty flavor leads the qi downward and softens hardness. The bland flavor also leads downward and promotes

urination. Therefore, by knowing the flavor of a food, we can know a lot about the viscera it may enter and the effects it may have on the body.

Likewise, herbs and foods can have five natures or temperatures: cold, cool, level (*i.e.*, balanced or neutral), warm, and hot. These natures, also sometimes referred to as a food's *qi*, describe the effect of the food on the body's temperature. In other words, warm and hot foods tend to heat the body up, while cool and cold foods tend to cool the body down. These descriptions are more theoretical than a food's flavor, and so are open to more differences of opinion in the Chinese medical literature. It is not uncommon to find one author who says a food is level, while another says it is cool or warm. Happily, such differences of opinion are usually never so great as to be completely opposite—one authority saying a food is hot while another saying it's cold. These temperatures have been worked out by Chinese medical thinkers based on the conditions a given food benefits and whether Chinese medicine defines those conditions as hot or cold. In other words, a food is usually considered cold if all the diseases or patterns it treats are hot.

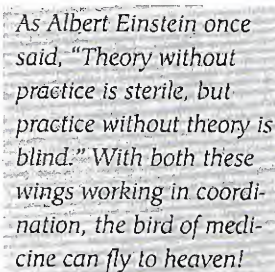
Channel-entries describe which viscus or bowel a food exerts its most pronounced influences on. Although the Chinese words are *gui jing* (归经), "channel gathering," these influences are not on the channels *per se* but rather on the organs. This information is even more theoretical than a food's nature. It is a relatively late addition to Chinese medical theory (beginning in the 12<sup>th</sup> century) and was definitely arrived at by working backwards from the conditions a food treats to the main viscera and bowels associated with that condition. Because of the many differences of opinion about these channel-entries, many Chinese dietary manuals leave out this information altogether, and, in any case, the reader should take it "with a grain of salt."

Functions refer to the actions of a food on the body stated in terms of Chinese medical theory. These functions describe how a food exerts the healing influences on the body that it does. In other words, if a food is said to clear heat and eliminate dampness and this is then followed by the fact that it is used to treat cholecystitis, then we know that it specifically treats damp heat in the gallbladder and that it restores balance and health to the body by getting rid of pathological heat and somehow eliminating too much dampness. In Chinese medical texts, these functions are also referred to as treatment principles when they are used in terms of treating disease. In that case, such treatment principles are the bridge or link which allows one to go



from the Chinese medical pattern discrimination to the choice of remedies. For instance, cholecystitis may also be due to liver depression and blood stasis. In that case, we still need a food or medicinal which treats cholecystitis, but now we need one which courses the liver and rectifies the qi, quickens the blood and transforms stasis. Therefore, these functions (and treatment principles) are extremely important to the proper practice of professional Chinese medicine.

Indications refer to the symptoms, conditions, or diseases a food is known to treat based on real-life, clinical experience. In theory, a certain food with a certain nature, flavor, and functions should be able to treat this or that disease, but in fact, it may not. Therefore, the Chinese medical description of each food is a combination of finely honed theory and centuries of direct observation. These two, theory and practice, are the two wings of the bird of medicine. As Albert Einstein once said, "Theory without practice is sterile, but practice without theory is blind." With both these wings working in coordination, the bird of medicine can fly to heaven!



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Therefore, the reader should take care not to grab at only a part of any food's Chinese medical description. You have to take the whole description into account and then think about it a bit. For instance, sugar is said to be sweet and boosts the qi. However, it also engenders fluids. While we may all think more qi or energy is good, eating too much sugar will actually generate too much dampness in the body. Likewise, we may find a food that is listed for a disease we have and think that we should eat a lot of it. However, if its nature, flavor, and functions do not match our individual Chinese medical pattern, this food is not going to do us much good and may actually do us harm.

Not every food we Westerners eat is found on this list. One of the outcomes of Columbus's "discovery" of the New World was a huge explosion in the numbers of varieties of foods. Chinese doctors have not had the time or opportunity to work out the Chinese medical descriptions of all of these. For instance, the reader will find peanuts, pine nuts, and almonds on the list below, but there is no Chinese medical descriptions of cashews and Brazil nuts. In this case, we know that all unsalted nuts are primarily sweet and all contain lots of oil. This means that all nuts are highly nutritious and contain a lot of *wei* or flavor. In small amounts, they supplement vacuity and moisten dryness. But overeaten or eaten by a person with spleen vacuity weakness, they may engender

dampness and phlegm. Similarly, we can know something about nectarines by comparing them with peaches and plums. Both are at least partially sweet and both engender fluids. Therefore, people with spleen dampness probably should take care when it comes to nectarines. In other words, even though a food may be missing from this list, we should be able to work out at least some of its Chinese medical description if we think about similar foods in its class and their Chinese medical descriptions.

### **Abalone**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, salty, and level; enters the liver and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Enriches yin and clears heat, fills the essence and brightens the eyes; treats dry cough, vaginal discharge, vaginal bleeding, urinary strangury,<sup>1</sup> and cataracts.

### **Aduki bean**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, sour, and level; enters the heart and small intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat and disinhibits urination, quickens the blood and transforms stasis, drains fire and resolves toxins; treats edema, leg qi, inhibited urination, sores, hemorrhoidal bleeding, and mild jaundice.

### **Agar**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and cold; enters the lung and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat in the lungs and upper burner; treats cough and hemorrhoids.

### **Alcohol**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Bitter, sweet, acrid, warm, and toxic; enters the heart, liver, lung, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Frees the flow of the blood vessels and disperses cold qi, arouses the spleen and warms the stomach; treats wind cold impediment<sup>2</sup> pain, contracture and spasm of the sinews and vessels, chest impediment, and chilly pain in the heart and abdomen.

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<sup>1</sup> Strangury refers to difficult, painful urination and mostly corresponds to a urinary tract infection.



**Alfalfa sprouts**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Bitter and cool; enters the spleen, stomach, and large intestine channels.

Functions & indications: Dries dampness, clears heat from the spleen and stomach, frees urination and defecation, expels stones; treats urinary stones and edema and heat accumulation constipation.

**Almond**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet and level; enters the lung and large intestine channels.

Functions & indications: Moistens the lungs, levels panting, and frees the flow of the stool; treats vacuity taxation coughing and panting and intestinal dryness constipation.

**Anise**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Acrid, sweet, and warm; enters the spleen, kidney, and liver channels.

Functions & indications: Warms yang and moves the qi; treats constipation, difficult urination, abdominal distention, mounting<sup>3</sup> pain, and low back pain.

**Apple**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet and cool; enters the lung, stomach, and large intestine channels.

Functions & indications: Engenders fluids and moistens the lungs, eliminates vexation and resolves summerheat, opens the stomach and arouses from alcohol.

**Apricot**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet, sour, and level; enters the spleen, stomach, lung, and large intestine channels.

Functions & indications: Moistens the lungs, levels panting, engenders fluids and relieves thirst; treats dry throat, dry cough, thirst, and fluid dryness constipation.

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<sup>2</sup> Impediment refers to a type of blockage. Mostly this term refers to rheumatic joint pain. However, it can also refer to chest pain.

<sup>3</sup> Mounting refers to problems in the sides of the lower abdomen and inguinal regions in both men and women. However, these days, this term is mostly used in relationship to inguinal hernias.

**Asparagus**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, bitter, and cold; enters the lung, spleen, and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat and eliminates dampness, moistens dryness and clears the lungs; treats hemoptysis,<sup>4</sup> enduring cough, wasting thirst, and constipation.

**Bamboo shoots**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and cold; enters the large intestine, lung, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat and transforms phlegm, harmonizes the center and moistens the intestines; treats phlegm heat congestion and exuberance, food distention, non-easy defecation, and non-emission of measles rash.

**Banana**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and cool; enters the lung and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat, moistens the intestines, and resolves toxins; treats heat diseases, vexatious thirst, and hemorrhoidal bleeding.

**Barley**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, salty, and slightly cold; enters the spleen, stomach, and gallbladder channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat and eliminates dampness, boosts the qi and regulates the center, cools the blood and transforms accumulations, strengthens the force (i.e., physical strength) and nourishes the blood, fortifies the spleen and disinhibits urination; treats indigestion, diarrhea, edema, and jaundice.

**Basil**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid and warm; enters the lung, spleen, stomach, and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Rectifies the qi and blood, scatters cold, dispels wind and eliminates dampness, and resolves toxins; treats external pattern headache, abdominal distention and pain, menstrual irregularities, diarrhea, and burping and belching.

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<sup>4</sup> Hemoptysis means coughing blood from the respiratory tract.

**Beef**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level; enters the spleen, liver, kidney, stomach, and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the qi and blood, enriches yin and engenders fluids, strengthens the sinews and bones; treats emaciation and cachexia, edema, wasting thirst, yin vacuity low back and knee pain and weakness.

**Beet**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level or cooling; enters the heart and liver channels.

**Functions & indications:** Nourishes and quickens the blood, supplements the heart and clears the liver; moistens the intestines; treats menstrual irregularities, blood vacuity, and fluid dryness constipation.

**Black fungus (a.k.a. tree ears)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level; enters the stomach and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Cools and quickens the blood and stops bleeding; treats blood stasis after external injury and childbirth, bleeding hemorrhoids, and vaginal bleeding.

**Black pepper**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid and hot; enters the stomach and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Warms the center and descends the qi, disperses phlegm and resolves toxins; treats cold phlegm, food accumulation, epigastric chilly pain, hiccup, vomiting of clear water; diarrhea, and chilly dysentery.

**Bok choy**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and slightly cold or cool; enters the lung, stomach, and bladder channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat and disinhibits urination; treats lung-stomach heat restlessness, thirst, and cough as well as difficult urination due to heat in the bladder.

**Broccoli**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet, slightly bitter, and cool; enters the spleen, stomach, and bladder channels.

Functions & indications: Clears heat and disinhibits urination, brightens the eyes and resolves summerheat; treats red, painful eyes, difficult urination, and vexatious heat.<sup>5</sup>

**Buckwheat**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet and cool; enters the spleen, stomach, and large intestine channels.

Functions & indications: Opens the stomach and loosens the intestines, descends the qi and disperses accumulations; treats intestine and stomach accumulation and stagnation, chronic diarrhea, dysentery prohibiting eating, swelling and flat abscesses on the upper back, scrofulas,<sup>6</sup> and scalding burns.

**Burdock root**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Acrid, bitter, and slightly cold; enters the liver and stomach channels.

Functions & indications: Clears heat and resolves toxins, combats cancer; treats various sorts of malign and toxic sores.

**Cabbage**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet, slightly bitter, and cool; enters the spleen, stomach, and large intestine channels.

Functions & indications: Clears the blood and fortifies the stomach, disinhibits the intestines and frees the flow of the stool, eliminates vexation within the chest, and resolves alcoholic thirst; treats constipation in the elderly and in women.

**Cantaloupe (honeydew, muskmelon, etc.)**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet, aromatic, and cool; enters the lung, heart, large intestine, small intestine, and bladder channels.

Functions & indications: Clears heat, moistens the lungs, and disinhibits urination; treats fever with thirst, reddish, scanty urination, dry cough, and fluid dryness constipation.

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<sup>5</sup> Vexatious heat refers to a hot, dry, annoying sensation in the chest in front of the heart.

<sup>6</sup> Scrofula in Chinese medicine means swollen glands or lymphadenopathy in Western medicine.

**Carambola (a.k.a. star fruit)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sour, sweet, and level; enters the spleen, stomach, lung, large intestine, and bladder channels.

**Functions & indications:** Engenders fluids and stops cough, downbears upward counterflow and harmonizes the stomach; treats sore throat, sores in the mouth, wind heat toothache and cough, hiccup, nausea, and indigestion, red, scanty, painful urination, hematuria,<sup>7</sup> urticaria,<sup>8</sup> and pruritus.<sup>9</sup>

**Caraway seed**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Slightly acrid and warm; enters the liver, kidney, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Moves the qi and opens the stomach, courses the liver and warms the kidneys; treats indigestion, abdominal distention, nausea, hiccup, scanty appetite, vomiting, mounting pain, and cold menstrual pain.

**Cardamon**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid, aromatic, and warm; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Transforms dampness and stops vomiting, rectifies the qi and harmonizes the stomach, quiets the fetus; treats nausea, vomiting, indigestion, abdominal distention and pain, loss of appetite, diarrhea, nausea during pregnancy, and threatened miscarriage.

**Carrot**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, acrid, and level or slightly warm; enters the lung and spleen channels.

**Functions & indications:** Fortifies the spleen and transforms stagnation; treats indigestion, enduring dysentery, and cough.

**Catfish**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and neutral; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

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<sup>7</sup> Hematuria means blood in the urine.

<sup>8</sup> Urticaria means hives.

<sup>9</sup> Pruritus means itching.

Functions & indications: Fortifies the spleen and supplements the qi, frees the flow of lactation and disinhibits urination; treats scanty lactation and edema.

### **Cauliflower**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet, slightly bitter, and slightly warm; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

Functions & indications: Fortifies the spleen, scatters cold, and stops pain; treats indigestion.

### **Cayenne pepper**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Acrid and hot; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

Functions & indications: Dispels cold and fortifies the stomach, quickens the blood and moves the qi; treats indigestion, loss of appetite, and wind damp cold impediment.

### **Celery**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet, bitter, and cool; enters the stomach and liver channels.

Functions & indications: Levels the liver and clears heat, dispels wind and disinhibits dampness; treats high blood pressure, dizziness and vertigo, headache, red face and red eyes, bloody dysentery, and welling abscesses and swellings.

### **Cherry**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet, aromatic, and warm; enters the spleen, stomach, lung, heart, and kidney channels.

Functions & indications: Supplements the qi, nourishes the blood, and engenders fluids, quickens the blood and transforms stasis, dispels wind dampness; treats wind heat dryness sore throat, qi and blood vacuity weakness, wind damp impediment in the lower half of the body, and numbness and paralysis.

### **Chestnut**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet and warm; enters the spleen, stomach, and kidney channels.

Functions & indications: Nourishes the stomach and fortifies the spleen, supplements the kidneys and strengthens the sinews, quickens the blood and stops bleed-

ing; treats spleen-stomach vacuity weakness, nausea, diarrhea, constitutional vacuity low back soreness and lower leg weakness, epistaxis,<sup>10</sup> hematemesis,<sup>11</sup> hemafecia,<sup>12</sup> metal wounds, contusions causing swelling and pain, scrofulas, and swelling toxins.

### Chicken

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and warm; enters the spleen, stomach, and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the qi and blood, warms the internal, and invigorates the kidneys; treats poor appetite, diarrhea, edema, frequent urination, vaginal bleeding and discharge, scanty lactation, and fatigue.

### Chicken egg

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level; enters the five viscera and stomach.

**Functions & indications:** Nourishes the blood and enriches yin, brightens the eyes and moistens dryness; treats dry cough, dry, sore throat, hoarse voice, blurred vision, and various blood vacuity-yin insufficiency conditions.

### Chive

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid and warm; enters the liver, kidney, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Rectifies the qi and blood, scatters cold and harmonizes the stomach; treats blood stasis due to traumatic injury, indigestion, abdominal distention, scanty appetite, nausea, and vomiting due to stomach cold.

### Cinnamon

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid, sweet, and hot; enters the kidney, spleen, and bladder channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the source yang, warms the spleen and stomach, eliminates accumulation and chill, and frees the flow of the blood vessels; treats life-gate fire debility, chilled limbs, a faint pulse, collapse of yang, vacuity desertion, abdominal pain, diarrhea, cold mounting, low back and knee chilly pain,

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<sup>10</sup> Epistaxis means nosebleed.

<sup>11</sup> Hematemesis means vomiting blood.

<sup>12</sup> Hemafecia means bloody stools or rectal bleeding.

blocked menstruation, concretions and conglomerations,<sup>13</sup> weeping yin flat abscesses, and heat above but cold below due to upward floating of vacuous yang.

### **Clam**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Salty, sweet, and cold; enters the spleen and stomach, liver and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Frees the flow of the water passageways, transforms phlegm and softens hardness, supplements the liver and kidneys; treats edema, profuse phlegm, goiter, lymphadenopathy, vaginal discharge, dry cough, and night sweats.

### **Clove**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid and warm; enters the kidney, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Warms the center and downbears upwardly counter-flowing qi, warms the kidneys and invigorates yang; treats stomach cold vomiting, hiccup, abdominal pain and diarrhea, clear, chilly vaginal discharge, cold uterus infertility, and yang vacuity impotence.

### **Cocoa (as in chocolate)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and neutral; no channel entry listed.

**Functions & indications:** Strengthens and invigorates, disinhibits urination; no indications given.

### **Coconut**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and warm; enters the spleen, stomach, and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Engenders fluids, disinhibits urination, and expels worms; treats vexatious thirst, wasting thirst, severe dehydration after bleeding or severe diarrhea, edema, and tapeworm and fasciolopsiasis.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Concretions and conglomerations refer to palpable lumps in the abdomen.

<sup>14</sup> Fasciolopsiasis means infection by a type of trematode worm. It is a parasitic condition.



**Coffee**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Bitter, acrid, and warm; enters the lung, liver, kidney, and stomach channels.

Functions & indications: Moves the qi and quickens the blood, resolves the exterior and disinhibits urination; treats chronic bronchitis, emphysema, *cor pulmonale*,<sup>5</sup> and hangover from alcohol.

**Coriander**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Acrid and warm; enters the lung and spleen channels.

Functions & indications: Emits sweat and out-thrusts rashes, disperses food and descends the qi; treats measles which are not easily out-thrust, and food accumulation and stagnation.

**Corn**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet and level; enters the heart, lung, spleen, liver, stomach, gallbladder, and bladder channels.

Functions & indications: Boosts the lungs and settles the heart, regulates the center and opens the stomach, disinhibits urination and the gallbladder; treats difficult urination, gallstones, jaundice, hepatitis, and hypertension.

**Corn oil**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet and neutral; no channel entry given.

Functions & indications: Disinhibits urination and lowers (blood) pressure; treats the same conditions as corn itself.

**Crab**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Salty and cold; enters the liver and stomach channels.

Functions & indications: Clears heat, scatters the blood, and promotes the union of broken bones; treats detriment damage to the sinews and bones, scabies, and scalding burns (when applied externally).

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<sup>5</sup> *Cor pulmonale* is heart-lung disease.

## Garlic

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid and warm; enters the spleen, stomach, and lung channels.

**Functions & indications:** Moves stagnant qi, warms the spleen and stomach, disperses concretions and accumulations, resolves toxins, and kills worms; treats food and drink accumulation and stagnation, epigastric chilly pain, water swelling, distention, and fullness, diarrhea, dysentery, malaria-like diseases, whooping cough, swelling and flat abscesses, and swelling toxins.

## Ginger (dry)

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid and hot; enters the spleen, stomach, and lung channels.

**Functions & indications:** Warms the center and dispels cold, returns yang and frees the flow of the vessels; treats heart and abdominal chilly pain, vomiting and diarrhea, chilled limbs, a faint pulse, cold rheum panting and coughing, wind cold damp impediment, yang vacuity vomiting and epistaxis, and precipitation of blood.

## Ginger (uncooked)

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid and slightly warm; enters the spleen, stomach, and lung channels.

**Functions & indications:** Resolves the exterior and scatters cold, stops vomiting and transforms phlegm; treats wind cold common cold, vomiting phlegm fluids, and cough with profuse phlegm.

## Goji berry (a.k.a. Himalyan goji, Tibetan goji, wolfberry)<sup>17</sup>

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and neutral; enters the liver, lung, and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Enriches kidney and lung yin, nourishes liver blood, mildly supplements kidney yang, fosters the essence and brightens the eyes; treats low back and knee soreness and weakness, impotence, spermatorrhea,<sup>18</sup> dizziness, blurred vision, diminished visual acuity, consumptive cough, and diabetes mellitus.

<sup>17</sup> This is *Fructus Lycii* (*Gou Qi Zi*) in Chinese herbal medicine.

<sup>18</sup> Spermatorrhea refers to involuntary loss of semen, mostly during sleep.

**Goose**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and neutral; enters the spleen and lung channels.

**Functions & indications:** Boosts the qi, supplements vacuity, nourishes the stomach, and relieves thirst; treats emaciation, fatigue, loss of appetite, thirst, and shortness of breath.

**Grape**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, sour, and level; enters the lung, spleen, and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the qi and blood, strengthens the sinews and bones, disinhibits urination; treats qi and blood vacuity weakness, lung vacuity cough, heart palpitations, night sweats, wind damp impediment pain, strangury conditions, and edema.

**Grapefruit**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, sour, and cold; enters the lung, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Rectifies the qi and downbears counterflow, engenders fluids and transforms phlegm; treats dry cough with phlegm, indigestion, burping and belching, mouth watering during pregnancy, and the ill effects of alcohol intoxication.

**Grapefruit peel**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid, sweet, bitter, and warm; enters the spleen, kidney, and bladder channels.

**Functions & indications:** Rectifies the qi and downbears counterflow, eliminates dampness and transforms phlegm; treats nausea and vomiting, abdominal distention and pain, indigestion and diarrhea in children.

**Green bean (a.k.a. string bean)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level; enters the spleen and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the spleen and kidneys; treats diarrhea, vomiting, wasting thirst, white vaginal discharge, seminal emission, and polyuria.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Polyuria means abnormal frequent, numerous urination

**Guava**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet, astringent, and warm; enters the lung, spleen, large intestine, and stomach channels.

Functions & indications: Supplements the spleen and engenders fluids, secures, astringes, stops diarrhea; treats wasting thirst, pediatric diarrhea, and hoarse throat.

**Hazelnut**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet, aromatic, slimy, and level; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

Functions & indications: Fortifies the spleen and opens the stomach, supplements the qi and blood, brightens the eyes; treats qi and blood vacuity weakness, emaciation, malnutrition, chronic diarrhea, and pediatric diarrhea.

**Honey**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet, glossy, and level; enters the lung, spleen, and large intestine channels.

Functions & indications: Supplements the center and moistens dryness, relaxes tension and resolves toxins; treats lung dryness cough, intestinal dryness constipation, stomach duct<sup>20</sup> aching and pain, runny nose, mouth sores, and scalding burns (when applied externally).

**Jasmine**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Acrid and slightly warm; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

Functions & indications: Eliminates dampness and harmonizes the center; rectifies the qi and resolves depression; treats damp obstruction of the middle burner with chest and stomach duct distention and fullness, loss of appetite, diarrhea, and abdominal pain.

**Job's tears barley**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet, bland, and slightly cold; enters the spleen, lung, and kidney channels.

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<sup>20</sup> / e., epigastric or upper abdominal

**Functions & indications:** Fortifies the spleen and stops diarrhea, disinhibits urination and seeps dampness, clears heat and expels pus, dispels wind dampness, clears and eliminates damp heat; treats various urinary difficulties, edema, leg qi, diarrhea, purulent sores and lung or intestinal abscesses, wind damp impediment, and various damp conditions of the intestines and skin.

### **Kelp**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Salty and cold; enters the kidney, liver, lung, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Softens hardness and transforms phlegm, disinhibits water and drains heat; treats scrofulas, concretions and conglomerations, water swelling, and foot qi.

### **Kiwi fruit**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sour, sweet, and cool; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat and engenders fluids, fortifies the spleen and stops diarrhea; treats fever with dry, painful throat, burning heat in the epigastrium with vomiting, jaundice due to damp heat, red, painful urination, indigestion, loss of appetite, and diarrhea due to spleen vacuity.

### **Kumquat**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid, sweet, slightly sour, and warm; enters the liver, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Rectifies the qi and harmonizes the stomach, dries dampness and transforms phlegm; treats abdominal distention and pain, nausea and indigestion, mounting pain, and cough with thin, clear phlegm.

### **Lamb (& goat)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and warm; enters the spleen and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Boosts the qi and supplements vacuity, warms the center and below; treats vacuity taxation emaciation and cachexia,<sup>21</sup> low back and knee

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<sup>21</sup> Cachexia means wasting and emaciation as in end-stage cancer, AIDS, and diabetes mellitus

soreness and weakness, postpartum vacuity chill, abdominal pain, cold mounting, and central vacuity hiccup.

### **Lemon**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sour, astringent, and warm; enters the lung, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Transforms phlegm and stops cough, engenders fluids and supplements the spleen; treats vexatious thirst, dry, painful throat, indigestion, and cough with profuse phlegm.

### **Lettuce**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Bitter, sweet, and cool; enters the stomach and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat, disinhibits urination, and promotes lactation; treats difficult urination, hematuria, and scanty lactation.

### **Litchi**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, slightly sour, and warm; enters the liver, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Engenders fluids and boosts the blood, rectifies the qi and stops pain; treats vexatious thirst, qi and blood vacuity weakness, spleen vacuity diarrhea, and stomach pain.

### **Longan**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and warm; enters the heart and spleen channels.

**Functions & indications:** Nourishes the heart and supplements the spleen; treats insomnia, heart palpitations, impaired memory, restlessness, blurred vision, and dizziness due to qi and blood dual vacuity.

### **Loquat**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet or sweet and sour and cool; enters the lung, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat, moistens the lungs, stops thirst, and down-bears the qi; treats dry, sore throat, vexatious thirst, and dry cough.

**Lotus root**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and cold; enters the heart, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat, cools the blood, and scatters stasis; treats vexatious thirst due to heat disease, epistaxis, hematemesis, and heat strangury.

**Lotus seed**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, astringent, and level; enters the heart, kidney, and spleen channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the spleen and stops diarrhea, supplements the kidneys and secures the essence, nourishes the heart and quiets the spirit; treats loss of appetite, chronic diarrhea, premature ejaculation, seminal emission, heart palpitations, insomnia, and restlessness.

**Malt syrup**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and warm; enters the spleen, stomach, and lung channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the middle burner, relaxes spasms, moistens the lungs, stops cough, and resolves toxins; treats loss of appetite, fatigue, and abdominal pain, dry cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, poisoning due to intake or excessive use of aconite (a.k.a. wolfbane or monkshood).

**Mango**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, sour, and cool; enters the lung, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Rectifies the qi and downbears counterflow, fortifies the spleen and boosts the stomach; treats cough, panting and wheezing, vomiting, and indigestion.

**Marjoram**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid and cool; enters the lung, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Resolves the exterior and clears summerheat, disinhibits urination and opens the stomach; treats summerheat, water swelling, and lack of appetite and bad breath due to food accumulation.

**Milk (human)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, salty, and level; enters the five viscera and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the blood and fills humors, fosters the essence and engenders muscle (i.e., flesh), transforms qi and quiets the spirit, boosts intelligence, grows the sinews and bones, disinhibits the joints, strengthens the stomach and nourishes the spleen, sharpens the hearing and brightens the eyes.

**Milk (cow)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level; enters the heart, lung, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements vacuity detriment, boosts the lungs and stomach, engenders fluids and moistens the intestines; treats vacuity weakness and taxation detriment, hiccup, diaphragmatic occlusion, wasting thirst, and fluid dryness constipation.

**Milk (goat)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and warm; enters the lung, kidney, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Warms, moistens, and supplements vacuity, supplements the lung and kidney qi, harmonizes the small intestine, boosts the essence qi; treats vacuity taxation emaciation and weakness, wasting thirst, hiccup, burping, and mouth sores.

**Millet**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, salty, and cool; enters the kidney, spleen and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Harmonizes the stomach and boosts the kidneys, eliminates heat and resolves toxins; treats spleen-stomach vacuity heat, stomach qi counterflow vomiting, wasting thirst, and diarrhea.

**Molasses**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and warm; enters the lung, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Fortifies the spleen and boosts the qi, moistens the lungs



and engenders fluids; treats abdominal distention and pain associated with spleen qi vacuity and dry cough with lung yin vacuity.

### **Mulberry**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, or sour and sweet, cool; enters the lung, spleen, liver, and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements vacuity and stops cough, disinhibits urination, disperses swelling, supplements the kidneys and brightens the eyes, nourishes the blood and supplements the liver; treats blurred vision and night blindness due to liver-kidney dual vacuity, dizziness, tinnitus, premature greying of hair, and wasting thirst.

### **Mung bean**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and cool; enters the heart and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat and resolves toxins, disperses summerheat and disinhibits water; treats summerheat, vexatious thirst, water swelling, diarrhea and dysentery, cinnabar toxins, welling abscesses and swellings, and medicinal toxicity.

### **Mushroom (white button)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and cool; enters the intestines, stomach, and lung channels.

**Functions & indications:** Opens the stomach, rectifies the qi, transforms phlegm, quiets the spirit, resolves toxins, out-thrusts rashes, and stops vomiting and diarrhea; treats the latter stages of heat diseases, bodily fatigue and qi weakness, dry mouth with no eating, cough with phlegm, chest and diaphragmatic oppression and fullness, vomiting and diarrhea, and pediatric measles rash which is not easily out-thrust.

### **Mussel**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Salty and warm; enters the liver and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the kidneys and invigorates yang, nourishes the liver and strengthens the sinews, moistens dryness and fills the essence; treats dizziness and vertigo, night sweats, impotence, low back pain, vaginal bleeding, and abnormal vaginal discharge due to liver-kidney dual vacuity.

**Mustard green**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid and warm; enters the lung and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Warms and resolves the exterior; transforms phlegm and scatters cold, rectifies the qi and blood, and warms the center; treats cold phlegm, cough and panting with profuse, white phlegm, and chest oppression.

**Nutmeg**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid and warm; enters the large intestine, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Secures the intestines and stops diarrhea, warms the center and moves the qi; treats enduring, hard-to-treat diarrhea or cockcrow diarrhea due to spleen-kidney vacuity, abdominal distention and pain, and vomiting due to spleen-stomach vacuity.

**Oats**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level; enters the spleen, stomach, lung, and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Fortifies the spleen, boosts the qi, and moistens dryness; treats spontaneous perspiration due to vacuity and fluid dryness of the intestines.

**Olive**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, sour, astringent, and level; enters the lung and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Astringes and secures, engenders fluids and moistens the lungs; treats dry, sore throat, dry cough, hemoptysis, enduring diarrhea and dysentery, and hangover due to alcohol.

**Onion**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid and warm; enters the lung, spleen, liver, and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Warms the internal and scatters cold, resolves the exterior and dispels wind, moves the qi and quickens the blood; treats wind cold common cold, diarrhea, and worms.

**Orange**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, sour, and cool; enters the lung and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Opens the stomach and rectifies the qi, stops thirst and moistens the lungs; treats chest and diaphragmatic bound qi, counterflow vomiting and scanty eating, stomach yin insufficiency, dry thirst within the mouth, lung heat cough, and excessive drinking of alcohol.

**Orange peel**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sour, bitter, aromatic, and warm; enters the lung, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Rectifies the qi and moves the spleen, harmonizes the center and loosens the diaphragm, dries dampness and transforms phlegm; treats indigestion, abdominal distention and pain, hiccup, burping and belching, nausea and vomiting, phlegm damp cough, chest oppression, profuse phlegm, damp turbidity obstructing the center, and lack of appetite.

**Oyster**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Salty, sweet, and level; enters the liver and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the liver and kidneys; treats insomnia, restlessness, and agitation.

**Oyster mushroom**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and slightly warm; enters the spleen, stomach, and liver channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the spleen, eliminates dampness, and relieves spasms; treats loss of appetite and damp impediment.

**Papaya**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, cold, and level; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Fortifies the spleen and stomach, clears summerheat and resolves thirst; treats fever with vexatious thirst, persistent cough, scanty lactation, and indigestion.

**Pea**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet and level; enters the heart, spleen, stomach, and large intestine channels.

Functions & indications: Fortifies the spleen and disinhibits urination, moistens the intestines and frees the flow of the stool; treats indigestion due to spleen-stomach vacuity weakness, edema, and fluid dryness constipation.

**Peach**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet, sour, and warm; enters the intestine and stomach channels.

Functions & indications: Engenders fluids and moistens the intestines, quickens the blood and disperses accumulations.

**Peanut**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet and level; enters the spleen and lung channels.

Functions & indications: Moistens the lungs, harmonizes the stomach, and stops bleeding; treats dry cough, nausea, foot qi, and scanty lactation.

**Pear**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet, slightly sour, and cool; enters the lung and stomach channels.

Functions & indications: Engenders fluids and moistens dryness, clears heat and transforms phlegm; treats heat disease damaging fluids, vexatious thirst, wasting thirst, heat cough, phlegm heat, fright mania, diaphragmatic occlusion, and constipation.

**Peppermint**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Acrid and cool; enters the lung and liver channels.

Functions & indications: Clears heat and resolves the exterior; clears the head and eyes and disinhibits the throat, out-thrusts rashes, courses the liver and rectifies the qi; treats wind heat common cold with fever, headache, cough, sore throat, red eyes, the early stage of measles, abdominal and rib-side distention and pain, irritability, and premenstrual breast and abdominal distention and pain.

**Persimmon**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, astringent, and cold; enters the lung, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Moistens the lungs, engenders fluids, and fortifies the spleen; treats epigastric heat and pain, coughing and wheezing, diarrhea and dysentery, bleeding hemorrhoids, high blood pressure, sores in the mouth, dry, painful throat, and incessant hiccups.

**Pineapple**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, slightly astringent, and level; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the spleen, engenders fluids, and dispels wind dampness; treats indigestion, vomiting, abdominal distention, low blood pressure, lack of strength in the hands and feet, vacuity fever with thirst, and difficulty urinating.

**Pine nut**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and warm; enters the liver, lung, and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Nourishes fluids, extinguishes wind, and moistens the lungs and large intestine; treats wind impediment, dizziness, dry cough, hematemesis, and constipation.

**Plum**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Bitter, sour, astringent, and cool; enters the spleen, stomach, and bladder channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat, disinhibits urination, and promotes digestion; treats indigestion, bleeding gums, gingivitis, chronic inflammation of the throat, and sores on the tongue and in the mouth.

**Pomegranate**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, sour, astringent, and cool; enters the lung, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat, moistens the lungs, and stops cough; treats dry, sore throat, hoarse voice, enduring cough, diarrhea and dysentery, and damp heat skin lesions.

**Pomelo**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, sour, and cool; enters the lung, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Fortifies the spleen, transforms phlegm, stops cough, and resolves alcohol toxins; treats cough with profuse phlegm, nausea, vomiting, and indigestion, hangover from alcohol, wind damp impediment, and swelling due to falls and knocks.

**Pork**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, salty, and level; enters the spleen, stomach, and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the kidneys and nourishes the blood, enriches yin and moistens dryness; treats heat disease damaging fluids, wasting thirst, kidney vacuity constitutional weakness, postpartum blood vacuity, dry cough, and fluid dryness constipation.

**Potato**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level or slightly cold; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the spleen and boosts the qi (when eaten cooked), clears heat and resolves toxins (when the juice is drunk or applied externally); treats acute hepatitis, breast abscesses, laryngitis, tonsillitis, mumps, and stomach and duodenal ulcers.

**Pumpkin (& other winter squash)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and warm; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the center and boosts the qi, disperses inflammation and stops pain, resolves toxins and kills worms.

**Pumpkin seed**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and warm; enters the spleen, stomach and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Kills worms, moistens the intestines and frees the flow of the stool; treats parasites, bleeding hemorrhoids, and scanty lactation.

**Purslane**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sour and cold; enters the large intestine, liver, and spleen channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat and resolves toxins, scatters the blood and disperses swelling; treats heat dysentery with pus and blood, heat strangury, bloody strangury, abnormal vaginal discharge, and welling abscesses and swellings, malign sores, cinnabar toxins,<sup>22</sup> and scrofulas (when applied externally).

**Radish**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid, sweet, and cool; enters the lung and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Disperses accumulations and stagnation, transforms phlegm and clears heat, descends the qi, broadens the center, and resolves toxins; treats food accumulation, distention and fullness, phlegm cough, hematemesis, epistaxis, wasting thirst, dysentery, and migraine headache.

**Raspberry**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sour, sweet, and warm; enters the liver and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Nourishes the liver and enriches the kidneys, secures and astringes; treats liver-kidney yin vacuity, seminal emission, and frequent, numerous urination.

**Red date (or jujube)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the spleen and boosts the qi, nourishes the blood and quiets the spirit; treats qi and blood vacuity weakness with fatigue, shortness of breath, scanty appetite, and loose stools, and irritability and restlessness due to visceral agitation.

**Rice (non-glutinous)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

<sup>22</sup> Cinnabar toxins refer to sudden, localized, reddening of the skin which usually affects the face and lower legs and is most common in children and the elderly. This condition usually occurs in the spring and summer.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the center and boosts the qi, fortifies the spleen and harmonizes the stomach; eliminates vexatious thirst, stops diarrhea and dysentery.

### **Rice (glutinous)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and warm; enters the lung, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the lungs and fortifies the spleen; stops diarrhea and spontaneous perspiration.

### **Rose**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid, sweet, and slightly warm; enters the spleen and liver channels.

**Functions & indications:** Eliminates dampness and harmonizes the center; rectifies the qi and resolves depression, quickens the blood and dispels stasis; treats damp impediment, stomach duct distention and fullness, nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhea, irregular menstruation of various types.

### **Rosemary**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid and warm; enters the lung and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Resolves the exterior and scatters cold, moves the qi and opens the stomach; treats wind cold common cold, headache, abdominal pain, indigestion, and menstrual pain.

### **Russian olive**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet or sour and sweet, and level; enters the lung, liver, spleen, kidney, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the spleen and stomach, nourishes the liver and moistens the lungs; treats indigestion, abdominal distention and pain, pediatric diarrhea, seminal emission, profuse menstruation, blurred vision, impaired memory, insomnia, cough with scanty or no phlegm, and menopausal dryness complaints.

### **Saffron**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level or warm; enters the heart and liver channels.



**Functions & indications:** Quickens the blood, transforms stasis, and stops pain; treats blood stasis patterns of blocked menstruation (*i.e.*, amenorrhea), painful menstruation, postpartum dizziness, concretions and conglomerations, heart and chest pain, and injuries due to falls and knocks.

### **Salt**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Salty and cold; enters the stomach, kidney, large intestine, and small intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Induces vomiting and disperses phlegm (when used as an emetic), cools the blood and clears fire, resolves toxins; treats food collected in the upper venter, heart and abdominal distention and pain, phlegm accumulated in the chest, non-free flow of urination and defecation, bleeding gums, sore throat, toothache, eye screen, sores, and toxins due to snake and insect bite.

### **Scallion**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid and warm; enters the lung and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Emits the exterior, frees the flow of yang, and resolves toxins; treats cold damage with fever and chills and headache, yin cold abdominal pain, worm accumulation obstructing internally, non-free flow of urination and defecation, dysentery, and welling abscesses and swellings (when applied externally).

### **Sesame (black or yellow)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level; enters the liver and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the liver and kidneys, moistens the five viscera; treats liver-kidney insufficiency, vacuity wind dizziness and vertigo, wind impediment, paralysis, large intestine dry binding, premature whitening of the hair, and scanty lactation in women.

### **Shark**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, salty, and level; enters the five viscera and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Boosts the qi, supplements vacuity, and opens the stomach.

**Shepherd's purse**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet and level; enters the liver, heart, lung, and spleen channels.

Functions & indications: Harmonizes the spleen, disinhibits water, stops bleeding, and brightens the eyes; treats dysentery, water swelling, strangury conditions, hematemesis, epistaxis, hemafecia, profuse menstruation, flooding and leaking, and red, swollen, painful eyes.

**Shiitake mushroom**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet and neutral; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

Functions & indications: Fortifies the spleen and supplements the qi; treats spleen-stomach vacuity weakness with lack of appetite, fatigue, shortness of breath, and frequent urination.

**Shrimp**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet and warm; enters the liver and kidney channels.

Functions & indications: Nourishes the liver and invigorates the kidneys; treats impotence and scanty lactation.

**Sichuan pepper**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Acrid, hot, and slightly toxic; enters the kidney, spleen, and stomach channels.

Functions & indications: Warms the center and scatters cold, kills worms and stops pain; treats chilly pain in the abdomen, vomiting and diarrhea, and abdominal pain due to worms.

**Sorghum**

Nature, flavor & channel entering: Sweet and warm; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

Functions & indications: Warms the center and fortifies the spleen, seeps dampness and stops dysentery; treats spleen vacuity with damp encumbrance, indigestion, damp heat precipitating dysentery, and inhibited urination.

**Soybean (black)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level; enters the spleen and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Quickens the blood and disinhibits water; dispels wind and resolves toxins; treats water swelling, distention and fullness, wind toxins, foot qi, jaundice, edema, wind impediment, sinew contraction, postpartum wind tetany;<sup>23</sup> welling abscesses and swellings, and sore toxins.

**Soybean (yellow)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level; enters the spleen and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Fortifies the spleen and loosens the intestines, moistens dryness and disperses water; treats *gan* accumulation diarrhea and dysentery, abdominal distention, emaciation, toxemia during pregnancy, sores and welling abscesses, swelling toxins, and bleeding due to external injury.

**Soybean oil**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid, sweet, and hot; no channel entry listed.

**Functions & indications:** Moistens and lubricates, moistens the intestines, kills worms; treats intestinal obstruction due to either adhesions or worms.

**Soybean sprout**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and cool; enters the spleen, stomach, and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat and disinhibits urination, harmonizes the stomach and disperses accumulations; treats food stagnation, heat in the stomach, edema, and damp heat impediment.

**Soy sauce (& miso)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Salty and cold; enters the stomach, spleen, and kidney channels.

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<sup>23</sup> Tetany means spasms and convulsions

**Functions & indications:** Eliminates heat and resolves toxins; treats bee and wasp stings, scalds and burns (when applied externally), and vexation and fullness in heat diseases.

### **Spearmint**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid and warm; enters the lung, liver, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Resolves the exterior and scatters cold, moves the qi and stops pain; treats indigestion, abdominal pain, wind cold common cold, headache, and menstrual pain.

### **Spinach**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and cool; enters the large intestine and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Nourishes the blood and stops bleeding, astringes yin and moistens dryness; treats epistaxis, hemafecia, frequent drinking due to wasting thirst, and constipation.

### **Squash (summer, including cucumber)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and cold; enters the spleen, stomach, and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat and disinhibits water, resolves toxins and disperses inflammation, stops thirst and quiets agitation; treats difficulty urinating, edema, summerheat, irritability, and oral thirst.

### **Squid (i.e., calamari)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Salty, sweet, and level; enters the liver and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Nourishes the liver and enriches the kidneys; treats blood vacuity, vaginal bleeding and discharge, and blocked menstruation (i.e., amenorrhea).

### **Strawberry**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, sour, and cool; enters the lung, spleen, liver, kidney, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Moistens the lungs and engenders fluids, supplements and nourishes the liver and kidneys, astringes and secures; treats dry cough with no or scanty phlegm, sore, swollen throat, lack of appetite and indigestion, frequent, numerous urination, hangover from alcohol, dizziness, and vacuity weakness after enduring disease.

### **Sugar (brown)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and warm; enters the liver, spleen, and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the spleen and boosts the qi, quickens the blood and transforms stasis; treats abdominal pain, dysentery, and lower abdominal pain due to insufficient or non-precipitation of the lochia<sup>24</sup> after childbirth.

### **Sugar (white)**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level; enters the lung and spleen channels.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the center and boosts the qi, harmonizes the center and moistens the lungs; treats lung dryness, lung vacuity, wind cold, taxation and fatigue, coughing and panting, pediatric malaria-like disease, mouth sores, and wind fire toothache.

### **Sunflower seed**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level; channel entry not yet established.

**Functions & indications:** Supplements the spleen and moistens the intestines, stops dysentery and disperses welling abscesses; treats intestinal dryness constipation, dysentery with pus and blood, and welling abscesses and swellings that have not yet broken.

### **Sweet potato**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and level or cool; enters the spleen and stomach channels.

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<sup>24</sup> The lochia is the dilute bloody discharge from the vaginal tract after birth.

leg weakness, impotence, seminal emission, frequent, numerous urination, stone strangury, and large intestine dryness and binding.

### **Water chestnut**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, bland, and cool; enters the lung, spleen, stomach, large intestine, and bladder channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat and transforms phlegm, engenders fluids and disinhibits urination, lowers blood pressure; treats lung heat with sticky, difficult-to-expectorate phlegm, dry, painful throat, fever with thirst, wasting thirst, red, scanty, painful urination, jaundice, red, painful eyes, measles, dysentery with blood in the stools, bleeding hemorrhoids, and hypertension.

### **Watercress**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Acrid, bitter, and cool; enters the lung, stomach, and bladder channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat and stops thirst, moistens the lungs and disinhibits urination; treats vexatious thirst, restlessness and irritability, dry, sore throat, and cough with yellow phlegm.

### **Watermelon**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and cold; enters the heart, stomach, and bladder channels.

**Functions & indications:** Clears heat and resolves summerheat, eliminates vexation and stops thirst, disinhibits urination; treats summerheat heat, vexatious thirst, heat exuberance damaging fluids, inhibition of urination, oral sores, and throat impediment.<sup>26</sup>

### **Watermelon seed**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and cold; no channel entry listed.

**Functions & indications:** Clears the lungs and moistens the intestines, harmonizes the center and stops thirst; treats epistaxis and rectal bleeding, chronic cough, hypertension, nephritis, and hepatitis.

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<sup>26</sup> Throat impediment means sore throat as well as the feeling of something stuck in the throat.

**Wheat**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet and cool; enters the heart, spleen and kidney channels.

**Functions & indications:** Nourishes the heart and boosts the kidneys, eliminates heat and stops thirst; treats visceral agitation, vexatious heat, wasting thirst, diarrhea and dysentery, welling abscesses and swellings, and bleeding due to external injury.

**White fungus**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, bland, glossy, and level; enters the lung and stomach channels.

**Functions & indications:** Enriches yin, moistens the lungs, and engenders fluids; treats insomnia, dry cough, and yin vacuity-fluid dryness conditions in general.

**Wu mei (a.k.a. mume or Chinese preserved plum)<sup>27</sup>**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sour and warm; enters the large intestine, liver, lung, and spleen channels.

**Functions & indications:** Secures the lung qi and stops cough, secures the intestines and stops diarrhea, engenders fluids and resolves thirst, kills worms and stops bleeding; treats lung qi vacuity cough, enduring diarrhea and dysentery, thirst, including wasting thirst, abdominal pain and vomiting from worms and intestinal dysbiosis, and hemafecia and uterine bleeding due to qi vacuity.

**Yogurt**

**Nature, flavor & channel entering:** Sweet, sour, and warm; enters the lung, liver, stomach, and large intestine channels.

**Functions & indications:** Moistens the lungs and large intestine, eliminates vexation and resolves thirst; treats dry cough and fluid dryness constipation.

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<sup>27</sup> This is *Fructus Mume* (*Wu Mei*) in Chinese herbal medicine.



In this chapter you will find a number of representative Chinese health food recipes. These have been taken from three other Blue Poppy Press books—*Chinese Medicinal Teas*, *The Book of Jook*, and *Chinese Medicinal Wines & Elixirs*—as well as various Chinese books on dietary therapy. In selecting these recipes, I have tried to focus on those that Westerners would actually eat and the ingredients of which they would have relatively easy access. In contrast, many of the recipes one finds in Chinese dietary manuals are simply not to the taste of most Westerners or their ingredients are not available outside China. As an example of some of the kinds of recipes non-Chinese may find not to their taste even if they could get the ingredients, the following is a list of recipe names recommended for anti-aging at a website on Chinese dietary therapy. I think their names speak for themselves.

Fried shredded beef with double celery & sea cucumber  
Prawn balls & scallops in Long Ching tea  
Borsch with glassy perchlet Cantonese style  
Steamed alligator with black beans & plum sauce  
Fried shrimp with angled loofah  
Fish head soup with herbs  
Fried and poached white bait



Braised sea cucumber with tea leaves  
 Monkey head mushroom soup  
 Yellow croacker with *Chiuchow* preserved mustard  
 Plum-flavored cuttlefish  
 Fresh water snake with black beans & barley in soup<sup>1</sup>

If you do enjoy some of the recipes below, you may want to check out more in the above three books.

I also strongly encourage readers to cook typical Western meals but using the theory and food descriptions of Chinese medicine. Let me be absolutely clear: *One does not have to eat Chinese food to make use of Chinese dietary therapy.* It is simply the matching of the natures and functions of foods one eats to one's personally presenting pattern(s) that makes a meal Chinese dietary therapy. That being said, I hope readers will be creative and adventurous in their use of the materials in this book. While I do sometimes eat Chinese foods, I also love Italian, French, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Indian, Vietnamese, and American foods just as much. It is not where a food or recipe comes from, but the principles it embodies that are important.

## ***Jook* Recipes**

*Jook* is the Cantonese name for water; called water rice (*shui fan*, 水米) in Mandarin. Basically, it means a dilute rice porridge. This is a very healthy form of eating since it is already 100° F soup. Thus it is easy to digest. Depending on what else one puts in the porridge one can make a *jook* for any pattern of any condition. In general, the recipe for cooking *jook* is to use 8-10 parts water to one part rice (or other grain) and then to cook the grain slowly over a period of four hours or more. In China and in many overseas Chinese communities, there are special restaurants which specialize in *jook*. In particular, *jook* makes a great breakfast since it can be slow-cooked in a crockpot overnight while you sleep.

## **Orange peel *jook***

Functions: Eliminates dampness and transforms phlegm

Indications: Phlegm damp conditions

<sup>1</sup> Anti-aging Recipes, <http://www.foodno1.com/efoodno1/menu/efood-chantung/efood-recipe-ct-antiaging.html>, last retrieved 2/1/2008

**Ingredients:** Dried orange peel, 12 grams, white or brown rice, 50 grams

**Method of preparation & administration:** First cook the orange peel for 30 minutes in a suitable amount of water and then remove the dregs saving the orange peel "tea." Then cook the rice in this tea. Eat 1-2 times per day warm or hot.

### **Aduki bean & rice jook**

**Functions:** Seeps dampness and disinhibits urination

**Indications:** Damp heat strangury

**Ingredients:** Aduki beans, 25 grams, rice, 25 grams

**Method of preparation & administration:** Cook the red beans and rice. Then eat the resulting porridge 1-2 times per day.

### **Four seeds & egg jook**

**Functions:** Supplements and enriches lung and kidney yin

**Indications:** Chronic cough and bronchitis due to lung-kidney yin vacuity

**Ingredients:** Ginkgo seeds, several, almonds, several, walnuts, several, peanuts, several, rice, 50 grams

**Method of preparation & administration:** Cook the nuts and rice, poaching two eggs at the end in the steaming hot porridge. Eat for breakfast continuously for several weeks or more.

### **Barbarian radish (i.e., carrot) jook**

**Functions:** Supplements the center and boosts the qi, disperses distention and transforms stagnation

**Indications:** Abdominal distention and food stagnation

**Ingredients:** Sliced carrots, 100 grams, rice, 50 grams

**Method of preparation & administration:** Cook the rice and carrots into porridge and eat for breakfast after overeating the night before.

### **Dried ginger jook**

**Functions:** Fortifies the spleen and warms the center, scatters cold and stops vomiting

**Indications:** Spleen-stomach cold vomiting and/or diarrhea, lung cold cough

**Ingredients:** Rice, 50 grams, dried ginger, 2-3 grams

**Method of preparation & administration:** Cook the rice and dried ginger in a suitable amount of water and eat on an empty stomach.

### **Fennel seed *jook***

**Functions:** Moves the qi and harmonizes the stomach, scatters cold and stops pain

**Indications:** Epigastric and abdominal qi distention and pain, lack of appetite, and flatulence

**Ingredients:** Rice, 50 grams, fennel seed, 15-30 grams, brown sugar, to taste

**Method of preparation & administration:** Cook the rice and fennel seeds in a suitable amount of water and add brown sugar to taste. Eat warm one time per day, with five days equaling one course of treatment.

### **Jujube *jook***

**Functions:** Supplements the heart and spleen and harmonizes the center

**Indications:** Heart-spleen vacuity insomnia, restlessness, fatigue, lack of strength, poor memory, heart palpitations

**Ingredients:** Rice, 50 grams, jujube, 8-10 pieces, brown sugar, a suitable amount

**Method of preparation & administration:** Cook the rice and jujubes in a suitable amount of water. Sweeten to taste with brown sugar. Then eat the resulting porridge, being sure to spit out the jujube seeds.

### **Radish *jook***

**Functions:** Rectifies the qi and transforms phlegm, clears heat and disperses food

**Indications:** Stomach heat and food stagnation indigestion, bad breath, and obesity

**Ingredients:** Rice, 50 grams, daikon (white) radish, one medium-sized, salt or soy sauce, a suitable amount

**Method of preparation & administration:** Cook the rice and sliced daikon radish in a suitable amount of water and season to taste with salt or soy sauce. Eat 1-2 times per day.

### **Celery *jook***

**Functions:** Clears liver heat and lowers blood pressure

**Indications:** Liver heat and yang hyperactivity hypertension

**Ingredients:** Celery, 25 grams, rice, 50 grams, salt or soy sauce, a suitable amount

**Method of preparation & administration:** Cook the celery and rice in a suitable amount of water and then season with a small amount of salt or soy sauce to taste. Eat 1-2 times per day.

### **Black soybean jook**

**Functions:** Quickens the blood and dispels wind, disinhibits water and disperses swelling

**Indications:** Chronic wind damp joint pain complicated by blood stasis

**Ingredients:** Rice, 50 grams, black soybeans, 15-20 grams, brown sugar, a suitable amount

**Method of preparation & administration:** Cook the rice and black soybeans in a suitable amount of water. Then add brown sugar to taste and eat regularly for breakfast for a long period of time.

### **Chinese-style Dishes**

The following Chinese-style recipes not only taste delicious but every ingredient in them serves a purpose. As with the *jooks* above, feel free to experiment and substitute ingredients to your own personal needs and liking.

### **Shrimp, chicken, water chestnut and shitake rice pot**

**Functions:** Supplements the spleen, liver, and kidneys while also seeping dampness

**Indications:** Spleen-kidney yang vacuity and/or liver blood-kidney yin vacuity with dampness

**Ingredients:** Shrimp, 15, chicken, 1/2 pound, shiitake mushrooms, 6-8, chestnuts, 12, rice, 1 1/2 cups, soy sauce, a suitable amount, roasted sesame oil, a suitable amount

**Method of preparation & administration:** First reconstitute the shiitake mushrooms and dried chestnuts in water. Then add the rice and all the other ingredients (except the soy sauce and sesame oil) to a covered casserole dish. Add water so that it covers all these ingredients to a depth of the knuckle of your thumb. Cook in a 375° F oven for 30 minutes. Remove from oven and test the rice. If it is not cooked enough, add more water if necessary and cook for another 10 minutes or so. Again remove from oven and season to taste with the soy sauce and sesame oil. Serves 2-3.

### Lamb soup with *Dang Gui*

**Functions:** Nourishes liver blood and supplements kidney yin and yang

**Indications:** Liver blood-kidney yin and/or yang vacuity

**Ingredients:** Slivered lamb, 1/2 pound, chopped walnuts, 2, jujube, 5, Radix Angelicae Sinensis (*Dang Gui*),<sup>2</sup> 10 grams, slivered longans,<sup>3</sup> 10 grams, star anise, 1, black pepper, 1/8 teaspoon, minced scallion, 1 teaspoon, fresh ginger, 1 thin slice, rice wine or cooking sherry, 1 tablespoon, salt, 1/2 teaspoon, soy sauce, 1 teaspoon

**Method of preparation & administration:** Boil the lamb in 2 cups of water with the scallions and ginger for 10 minutes, skimming off any bubbles from the surface. Add all the other ingredients except the soy sauce and wine and cook for 10 more minutes. Remove the *Dang Gui* root and the slice of ginger. Add the soy sauce and wine and serve hot. Serves 1.

### Oxtail & tomato soup

**Functions:** Supplements the qi and blood

**Indications:** Qi and blood vacuity

**Ingredients:** Oxtail, 1/2 pound, celery, 1 stalk, tomato, 3/4 pound, garlic, 4 cloves, onion, 1 medium, crushed anise seed, 1/4 teaspoon, crushed cloves, 1/4 teaspoon, black pepper, 1/4 teaspoon, rice wine or cooking sherry, 1 tablespoon

**Method of preparation & administration:** Chop the oxtail into small pieces. (If one does not have or like oxtail, one can use beef.) Chop the onion, tomato, and celery and mince the garlic. Put 4 tablespoons of cooking oil in a hot wok and fry the meat. Add 10 cups of water to the wok after about 6-7 minutes of frying and skim off any bubbles that form on the surface. Add the anise seed and cloves and cover the mixture. Allow to simmer for 30 minutes. In another pan, fry the onion, celery, garlic, and tomato for several minutes until the onion is transparent. Then add this to the large wok with the meat in it. Add the remaining ingredients and simmer until half the water has evaporated. Serves 6-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Dang Gui* (a.k.a. *tang kuei*) can be purchased from Chinese herb stores and apothecaries. If kept in a sealed jar, it will keep for three years.

<sup>3</sup> Longans (*Anillus Longanae*, *Long Yan Rou*) are a Chinese dried fruit which can be bought at Chinese herb stores and many Oriental specialty food stores.

## Seaweed & egg drop soup

**Functions:** Enriches kidney yin at the same time as drains liver heat and lowers blood pressure

**Indications:** Liver yang hyperactivity hypertension and predisposition to stroke

**Ingredients:** Nori seaweed,<sup>1</sup> 2 sheets, eggs, 3, chicken broth, 6 cups, minced leek or scallion, 1/4 cup, minced fresh ginger, 1/4 teaspoon, rice wine or cooking sherry, 1 tablespoon, roasted sesame seed oil, 1 dash

**Method of preparation & administration:** Toast the nori sheets quickly over flame or burner until they change color from purple to green and then crush them and add to the chicken broth in a large pot. Simmer for 10 minutes. Gently pour in the slightly beaten eggs and add the other ingredients. Stir gently and serve as soon as the eggs appear cooked. Serves 4-6.

## Quick preserved vegetable sauté

**Functions:** Enriches kidney yin at the same time as drains liver heat and lowers blood pressure

**Indications:** Liver yang hyperactivity hypertension and predisposition to stroke

**Ingredients:** Slivered pork, 1/2 pound, chopped leek, 1 stalk, Chinese preserved vegetables, 1 small can, green beans, 1/2 pound, garlic clove, 1, fresh ginger, 1 slice, broccoli, 1/4-1/2 pound, bamboo shoots, 1/4 pound

**Method of preparation & administration:** Parboil the green beans for five minutes and drain. Heat 3-4 tablespoons of cooking oil in a wok and sauté the pork, chopped leek, minced garlic, and chopped broccoli until the pork turns brown. Add the finely chopped bamboo shoots and the green beans with enough soy sauce to season. Serve hot with rice or noodles. Serves 2.

## Shiitake & abalone soup

**Functions:** Enriches kidney yin at the same time that it drains liver heat and lowers blood pressure

**Indications:** Liver yang hyperactivity hypertension and predisposition to stroke

**Ingredients:** Shiitake mushrooms, 5-6, abalone filet, 1, snow peas, 1/2 cup, salt, 1/2

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<sup>1</sup> Available at most health food stores

teaspoon, sesame oil, 1 tablespoon, soy sauce, 1 teaspoon, honey or sugar, 1/2 teaspoon, minced leek or scallion, 1 tablespoon, fresh ginger, 1 slice, crushed garlic, 2 cloves, cornstarch or kudzu root powder, 1 teaspoon dissolved in 3 cups water

**Method of preparation & administration:** Soak the mushrooms in water for one hour, then remove the stem, and slice. Also slice the abalone filet. Heat the oil in a wok, add the leek, garlic, ginger, and mushrooms, and quickly braise for half a minute or so. Add the abalone and snow peas and stir for another half-minute. Then add water and cornstarch mixture and stir until slightly thickened. Serves 4.

### **Three mushrooms & Chinese celery stir-fry**

**Functions:** Nourishes liver blood, enriches kidney yin, and clears liver heat

**Indications:** Liver yang hyperactivity high blood pressure, dizziness, arteriosclerosis, and high cholesterol

**Ingredients:** Chinese celery, 8 stalks, shiitake mushrooms, 10, wood ear fungus, 1 cup, velvet foot (enoki) mushrooms, 2 cups, king trumpet (eryngii) mushrooms, 2 cups, garlic, 8 cloves, cooking oil, 2 tablespoons, roasted sesame oil, 1 tablespoon, soy sauce, 2 tablespoons, sesame seeds, 1 tablespoon, salt and pepper, a suitable amount

**Method of preparation & administration:** Add one tablespoon of oil to a pre-heated wok. When the oil starts to flow freely, add the crushed garlic cloves. Do not over cook the garlic or it will become bitter. Add the sliced celery, soy sauce, sesame seeds, and pepper to taste. When the celery is cooked but still crunchy, add salt and the sesame oil. You may need to add some water to retain the moisture of the vegetables. Slice the various mushrooms. Remove the celery from the wok and cook the rest of the ingredients the same way. Then recombine all the ingredients and serve. Serves 4.

### **Lamb, ginger & Dang Gui dumplings**

**Functions:** Supplements the qi and blood, moves the qi and quickens the blood, and regulates menstruation

**Indications:** Qi and blood vacuity with or without qi stagnation and blood stasis resulting in various menstrual irregularities

**Ingredients:** Wonton skins, 80, ground lamb, 1 1/2 pounds, chives, 1 bunch, pow-

dered Radix Angelicae Sinensis (*Dang Gui*), 10 grams, mushrooms, 1 cup, black fungus, 1 cup, garlic, 6 cloves, fresh ginger, 1/4 cup, chicken broth, 1/2 cup, salt, pepper, oyster sauce, *Shaoxing* wine, or cooking sherry to taste.

**Method of preparation & administration:** Chop the mushrooms and ginger and mash the garlic. Add all of the ingredients to a bowl and mix them thoroughly. Then fill the wonton wrappers with this filling. As you make the dumplings, stack them in a plate in one tier. Do not place one tier of dumplings on another tier or the juices may run and make the dumplings stick together.

To cook boiled dumplings, bring a pot of water to a boil and add several dumplings to the pot. Do not add too many dumplings at one time or you may have a problem retrieving them when they are done. When the dumplings are cooked, they will float to the surface and you can remove them with a wire net.

To steam-fry dumplings, add oil to a medium-hot pan. When the oil begins to smoke, add a row of dumplings stacked closely to one another in the pan. When the dumplings start to brown, turn them over. Add some water and cover the dumplings. This allows the dumplings to steam and complete the cooking process. Serves: 6-8.

### **Black wood-ear & chicken soup**

**Functions:** Supplements the qi and blood, moves the qi and quickens the blood

**Indications:** Postpartum blood vacuity and blood stasis with abdominal pain, excessive bleeding, prolonged lochia, dizziness

**Ingredients:** Black wood-ears, 30 grams, chicken, one-half (approximately 400 grams), rice wine, 180 grams, fresh ginger, 5 slices

**Method of preparation & administration:** Soak the wood-ears for 30 minutes until soft, rinse, and cut into thin strips. Wash the chicken, remove the skin and fat, and also cut into pieces. Next, put the chicken in boiling water for a couple of minutes, remove, and drain. Put all ingredients in a pot with adequate water (about 5 cups) and cook for 30 minutes. Add the rice wine and cook until about 3 cups of soup is left. Season with salt to serve and eat all ingredients with soup. Eat with a meal once a day for five days as one course of therapy. If necessary, repeat one more course for a complete recovery. Serves 2.



## American-style Recipes

### Spinach-tofu casserole

**Functions:** Nourishes yin and moistens dryness, clears heat from the lungs and stomach

**Indications:** Constipation, stomach and mouth ulcers, swollen gums, hypertension

**Ingredients:** Firm tofu, 6 blocks (i.e., 6 pounds), onions, 1 quart diced, minced garlic, 1 tablespoon, olive oil, 2 tablespoons, spinach, 3 bunches, tahini, 2 tablespoons, lemon juice, 2 tablespoons, salt and pepper to taste, filo dough, 12 pieces, lemon and parsley to garnish

**Method of preparation & administration:** Cover the tofu with something heavy to squeeze out the water. Sauté the onions and garlic in oil until the onions are soft. Add the washed and dried spinach and cook until the spinach is tender. Take the tofu and crumble it up with your hands. Add the onion and spinach mixture to the tofu and then add the remaining ingredients except the filo dough. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Next, oil a casserole pan and line it with four sheets of oiled filo dough. Spread half of the tofu mixture on top. Then lay down four more sheets of oiled filo dough and spread the remaining tofu mixture on top. Top with the remaining four sheets of oiled filo. Bake the casserole for 30 minutes at 350°F or until the top filo dough is golden. Garnish with lemon wedges and parsley. Serves 10-12.

### Baked mashed turnips

**Functions:** Clears heat and eliminates dampness, disperses food accumulation and stagnation, transforms phlegm and stops coughing

**Indications:** Overweight, cough, and all other conditions associated with phlegm dampness and/or food stagnation

**Ingredients:** Turnips, 2-3 pounds, non-fat milk, 1/2 cup, butter, salt, and pepper to taste

**Method of preparation & administration:** Wash, cube, and boil the turnips until they are fork-soft. Then blend in a food processor. Add butter, salt and pepper to taste, mix, and bake covered in an oven for one hour. Serves 4.

### Leek & onion pie

**Functions:** Warms the interior and scatters cold, moves the qi and quickens the blood

**Indications:** Interior cold conditions as well as qi and blood stasis and stagnation conditions

**Ingredients:** Leeks, 4, onions, 2, water, 1 cup, cornstarch or kudzu root powder, 2 tablespoons, soy sauce, 1 1/2 tablespoons, cider vinegar, a dash, salt and black pepper, a dash, your favorite pie crust recipe or a prepackaged pie crust

**Method of preparation & administration:** Line a pie dish with the crust. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Sauté the coarsely chopped leeks and onions for 8-10 minutes in a wok using butter or cooking oil. Dissolve the kudzu root powder or cornstarch in water with the soy sauce and add to the onion and leek mixture, stirring until it thickens. Add a dash of salt, pepper, and vinegar and pour into the waiting pie shell. Roll out a top crust, lay it over the top, and flute the edges. Prick the top to allow steam to escape and bake for 35-45 minutes until the crust is browned. Allow to cool and set for 15-20 minutes after removing from the oven. Serves 4.

**Note:** Some readers may object to the inclusion of a little milk and butter in a dish intended to eliminate dampness and transform phlegm. However, this is the brilliance of Chinese dietary therapy. Because of the acrid, warm nature of the leeks and onions as well as the acrid, hot nature of the black pepper, these ingredients actually help move and transform the dairy products in this dish. Thus one can "have their cake and eat it too."

### Delightful apricot bars

**Functions:** Supplements the spleen and boosts the qi, moistens the lungs and stops coughing

**Indications:** Fluid dryness constipation and/or lung dryness cough complicated by spleen vacuity

**Ingredients:** Dried apricots, 3 cups, grated lemon peel, 1 large tablespoon, 1/4 teaspoon salt, water, 2 cups, vanilla extract, 1 teaspoon, rolled oats, 1 cup, whole wheat pastry flour, 1/2 cup, rice flour, 1/2 cup, wheat germ, 1 cup, unsweetened shredded coconut, 3/4 cup, melted butter, 3/4 cup

**Method of preparation & administration:** Boil the apricots, lemon peel, and salt in one cup of the water. Mash the apricots with a fork while they are cooking and, when this is almost smooth, add the vanilla and set aside. Preheat an oven to 350° F. Mix the dry ingredients in a bowl, add the butter, and mix well. Heat the other cup of

water and pour over the dry mixture and stir thoroughly. Next, press a third of the oat mixture into the bottom of a nine-inch square baking pan that has been well greased. Smooth on half of the apricot mixture. Then repeat this sequence again, topping the whole thing with the final third of the oat mixture. Press down firmly so that all hold together. Bake for 45 minutes or so until the top layer is nicely brown. Cut to your preferred size when cool.

### **Apple agar dessert**

**Functions:** Clears heat, moistens dryness, stops coughing, and frees the flow of the stools

**Indications:** Lung heat and/or dryness cough, fluid dryness constipation

**Ingredients:** Agar, 3 bars, apple juice, 4 1/2 cups, water, 1 1/2 cups, vanilla extract, 2 teaspoons, peaches, 3 cups, tahini, 2 tablespoons, apple cider vinegar, a dash, salt, 1/2 teaspoon, almonds, 6

**Method of preparation & administration:** Bring the agar, juice, salt, and water to a boil. Simmer until the agar has dissolved and then stir in the vanilla extract. Wash, peel, and slice the peaches. Line the bottom of a nine-inch shallow baking pan with two-thirds of the peaches. Gently pour the hot agar mixture over the peaches. Chill in the refrigerator until firmly set. Cut the agar into squares. Whip the remaining peaches in a blender with the tahini and vinegar. Use this as a sauce over the agar squares. Then top with the slivered almonds.

### **White corn & baby pea salad**

**Functions:** Clears and eliminates damp heat from the liver-gallbladder and lowers blood pressure, disinhibits urination and seeps dampness

**Indications:** Damp heat cholecystitis and cholelithiasis, hypertension, excessive dampness

**Ingredients:** 1 16-ounce package of frozen white corn, thawed, 1 16-ounce package frozen baby peas, thawed, chopped peeled jicama, 1 cup, chopped celery, 2/3 cup, thinly sliced green or red pepper, 1/4 cup, chopped green onions, 1/2 cup, seasoned rice vinegar, 1/2 cup, brown sugar, 2 tablespoons, snipped fresh parsley, 1 tablespoon, salt, 1/2 teaspoon, white pepper, a dash, snipped fresh mint (optional), 1 tablespoon

**Method of preparation & administration:** In a bowl, combine the corn, peas, jicama, celery, green pepper, and green onions. In a jar, mix together the rice vinegar, brown sugar, parsley, salt, and white pepper and shake well. Pour over salad and toss. Cover and chill for two hours. Add mint, if desired. Serves 8.

## Roasted garlic creamed potatoes

**Functions:** Fortifies the spleen and supplements the qi, warms the interior and moves the qi

**Indications:** Spleen qi or yang vacuity with food stagnation resulting in abdominal distention and fullness

**Ingredients:** Yukon Gold potatoes, 5 large, peeled and diced, garlic cloves, 4 large roasted, unsalted butter, 1/4 cup, heavy cream, 1/2 cup, salt and pepper to taste

**Method of preparation & administration:** Preheat the oven to 300° F. Place the potatoes in a medium saucepan with water to cover. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce heat to maintain a low boil, and cook about 10 minutes or until soft. Drain the potatoes and place them on a baking sheet in the oven for about 10 minutes to dry out. Remove the potatoes from the oven and place in a large mixing bowl. Whip the potatoes adding garlic, butter, cream, salt, and pepper. Serves 4.

**Note:** Once again the garlic and pepper make the dairy products more digestible and less likely to produce unwanted phlegm and dampness.

## Barley & tempeh stuffed acorn squash

**Functions:** Supplements the qi and blood, warms the center, moves the qi, and eliminates dampness

**Indications:** Qi and blood vacuity with spleen vacuity and dampness

**Ingredients:** Acorn squashes, 2 medium, halved, seeds removed, washed, 1 8-ounce package tempeh, 1 10 1/2-ounce can vegetable broth, barley, 1/2 cup, Crimini mushrooms, cleaned, chopped, 1/2 pound, onion, 1/2 medium, peeled, diced, red pepper, 1 small, washed, cored, seeded, diced, garlic, 2 cloves, peeled, minced, ground thyme, 2 teaspoons, chopped fresh parsley, 2 tablespoons, black pepper, 1/4 teaspoon, soy sauce, 2 tablespoons, fat-free Monterey jack cheese, 2 ounces, grated

**Method of preparation & administration:** Preheat oven to 375° F. Spray baking sheet with cooking spray. Place squashes, cut side down, on baking sheet and bake at 375° F for 45 minutes or until tender when pierced with a fork. Meanwhile, in large pot with steaming basket or colander, bring 2 inches of water to a boil over high heat. Break tempeh into four pieces, place in steamer basket, and reduce heat to medium. Cover and steam for 20 minutes. Remove, cover, and set aside to cool slightly. In medium saucepan, bring one cup of broth to a boil. Add

the barley, return to a boil, then reduce heat to simmer; cover, and cook until all water is absorbed, approximately 20 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand, covered for five minutes. Transfer to large bowl and set aside. Spray large nonstick skillet with vegetable cooking spray. Crumble steamed tempeh into small pieces and add to skillet. Cook on medium-high heat until lightly browned, about 3-4 minutes. Remove from skillet and add to mixing bowl with barley. Re-spray skillet with vegetable cooking spray. Add mushrooms, onion, red pepper, garlic, thyme, parsley, black pepper, soy sauce, and remaining (2 1/2 oz.) vegetable broth. Stir with wooden spoon to sauté vegetables and to deglaze brown bits of tempeh from skillet. Continue cooking until onion and pepper is soft, about 3-4 minutes. Add vegetable mixture to barley and tempeh and gently mix. Remove squash from oven, let cool slightly and stuff with barley and tempeh stuffing. Sprinkle top with cheese and return, uncovered, to oven. Bake 10-15 minutes or until cheese on top melts and squash is fork tender. Cool slightly before serving. Serves 4.

### **Eggplant caponata**

**Functions:** Quickens the blood and dispels stasis

**Indications:** Blood stasis

**Ingredients:** Vegetable cooking spray, a suitable amount, olive oil, 1 teaspoon, eggplant, 1 small, peeled, diced (skins remain on), onion, 1/2 small, peeled, diced fine, celery, 1 stalk, washed, trimmed, diced fine, garlic, 2 cloves, peeled, minced, pimiento-stuffed olives, 2 medium, diced, capers, 1 tablespoon, catsup, 1 tablespoon, red wine vinegar, 1 teaspoon, dried oregano, 1/4 teaspoon, freshly ground black pepper, 1/4 teaspoon

**Method of preparation & administration:** Spray a large nonstick skillet with vegetable cooking spray and add olive oil. Place over medium heat and add the egg plant, onion, celery, and garlic. Sauté until tender, about 6-7 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the olives, capers, catsup, vinegar, oregano, and black pepper and stir gently to combine. Continue to cook until heated throughout, about five minutes. Cool slightly before serving. Serves 4 as an appetizer.

As an exercise to help really internalize the logic of Chinese dietary therapy, I highly recommend the reader look up the ingredients in the Chinese food materia medica included in the preceding chapter and then try to understand the functions and indications of each of the above recipes. In this way, the reader will see that one really

does not have to eat Chinese foods or Chinese-style recipes in order to get the full benefits of Chinese dietary therapy.

## Chinese Medicinal “Teas”

The next group of formulas are for simple, 1-2 ingredient Chinese medicinal teas. These can be drunk as a beverage with healthy properties or can be used remedially for specific patterns of specific conditions. Here, the word “tea” refers to a beverage made by steeping one or more ingredients in hot water. Technically, this is an infusion. These teas may or may not contain tea leaves (*Folium Camilliae Sinensis*, *Cha Ye*). Most of the ingredients in this section are commonly available in the produce or herb sections of health food stores. Some of these ingredients may also be in your garden.

### Licorice & orange peel tea

Functions: Fortifies the spleen and rectifies the qi

Indications: Peptic ulcers and excessive gastric secretion of acid due to spleen qi vacuity weakness

Ingredients: Dried orange peel, 10 grams, licorice root, 5 grams, sliced

Method of preparation & administration: Tear the orange peel into pieces, place both ingredients into a cup, and soak in hot boiled water. This may be drunk at any time in the day.

### Orange peel & tea leaves

Functions: Transforms phlegm and stops cough, rectifies the qi and harmonizes the stomach

Indications: Chronic bronchitis with profuse phlegm due to lung phlegm dampness

Ingredients: Tea leaves, 2 grams, dried orange peel, 2 grams

Method of preparation & administration: Place the two ingredients in a cup, pour boiling water into the cup, and allow to steep for 10 minutes. Drink as a beverage any time in the day.

### Peppermint & licorice tea

Functions: Clears heat and dispels wind

Indications: Wind heat exterior contraction with sore throat, nasal congestion, fever, and other such signs of the beginning of a common cold

**Ingredients:** Peppermint, 9 grams, licorice root, 3 grams, sliced, white sugar to taste  
**Method of preparation & administration:** Place the licorice root in a pot and add one quart of water. Boil for 10 minutes. Then add the peppermint and allow to steep for 10 minutes. Strain off the liquid and reserve, adding a small amount of sugar to taste. Drink when cool throughout the day.

### **Radish leaf tea**

**Functions:** Disperses food and transforms stagnation  
**Indications:** Food stagnation indigestion with nausea, abdominal distention, and lack of appetite  
**Ingredients:** Radish leaves, 100 grams  
**Method of preparation & administration:** Tear the radish leaves into pieces and place in a pot. Pour in boiling water and allow to steep for 10 minutes. Strain out the dregs and drink the resulting liquid warm in small servings over a period of time.

### **Rice & ginger tea**

**Functions:** Fortifies the spleen and disinhibits urination  
**Indications:** Chronic diarrhea due to spleen qi vacuity weakness  
**Ingredients:** Tea leaves, 15 grams, fresh ginger, 3 grams, sliced, rice, 30 grams  
**Method of preparation & administration:** First make a pot of tea and reserve the liquid. Then rinse the rice well, add the fresh ginger, and simmer in water that has been used to make the tea. Drink warm; one "packet" per day.

### **Sesame oil & honey tea**

**Functions:** Moistens the intestines and frees the flow of the stools  
**Indications:** Intestinal dryness habitual constipation  
**Ingredients:** Honey, 65 grams, roasted sesame oil, 35 milliliters  
**Method of preparation & administration:** Add the roasted sesame oil to the honey, pour in boiling water, and stir. Take once in the morning and once again in the evening.

### **Day lily tea**

**Functions:** Clears heat and stops bleeding

**Indications:** Heat-type hemorrhoidal bleeding

**Ingredients:** Day lily flowers, 100 grams, brown sugar, a suitable amount

**Method of preparation & administration:** Boil these two ingredients until the lily flowers are cooked. Then discard the dregs. Drink the resulting liquid in the morning when the stomach is empty. Take this tea continuously for several days.

### **Corn silk tea**

**Functions:** Clears heat and eliminates dampness, disinhibits the gallbladder and calms the liver

**Indications:** Damp heat cholecystitis, gallstones, hypertension, diabetes, and nephritic edema

**Ingredients:** Corn silk, a large handful

**Method of preparation & administration:** Place the corn silk in a pot, add boiling water, and allow to steep for 10 minutes. Strain out the dregs and drink frequently as a tea.

### **Self-heal lower pressure tea**

**Functions:** Clears heat, disinhibits urination, and lowers blood pressure

**Indications:** Liver yang hyperactivity blood pressure

**Ingredients:** Self-heal spikes, 10 grams, plantain leaves, 12 grams

**Method of preparation & administration:** Place the two types of leaves in a cup and pour in boiling water. Allow to steep for 10 minutes, remove the dregs and drink freely as a tea.

### **Rose flower tea**

**Functions:** Moves the qi and harmonizes the blood, courses the liver and resolves depression

**Indications:** Liver-stomach qi pain in the chest, breasts, and rib-sides, menstrual irregularities due to qi stagnation and blood stasis

**Ingredients:** Rose flowers, 6-10 grams

**Method of preparation:** Place the dry rose flowers in a teapot, pour in boiling water, and allow to steep for 10 minutes. Drink the resulting tea warm at any time of the day.



## Chinese Medicinal Wines

In Chinese medicine, alcohol is believed to be a very potent ingredient. In its own right, it moves the qi and quickens the blood. However, it also potentizes other ingredients taken with it, insuring that the medicinal effects of these other ingredients reach throughout the body. Therefore, Chinese have long used various types of medicinal "wines" or tinctures. These wines are easy to make and make for interesting conversations. Many of the ingredients in this section are available in the herb sections of health food stores or can be purchased from Chinese apothecaries in Chinese communities.

### Astragalus<sup>5</sup> wine

**Functions:** Fortifies the spleen and boosts the qi

**Indications:** Spleen qi vacuity weakness with fatigue, lack of strength, lassitude of the spirit

**Ingredients:** Astragalus root (*Radix Astragali*, *Huang Qi*), 300 grams, sliced, alcohol,<sup>6</sup> 2 quarts

**Method of preparation & administration:** Place the Astragalus root in a large jar and soak in the alcohol. Seal the lid and allow to sit for one month. Open, remove the dregs, and store for use. Drink one small Chinese teacup 1-3 times per day.

### Red date wine

**Functions:** Supplements the heart, fortifies the spleen, and quiets the spirit

**Indications:** Heart-spleen dual vacuity with restlessness, insomnia, profuse dreams, fatigue, pale lips and nails, lack of strength, heart palpitations

**Ingredients:** Jujubes (a.k.a. Chinese red dates),<sup>7</sup> 600 grams, alcohol, 1 quart

**Method of preparation & administration:** Place the Jujubes in the alcohol in a large jar, seal, and soak for one month. Later, open, remove the dregs, and store the resulting tincture for use. Take one small Chinese teacup 1-3 times per day.

### Goji berry<sup>8</sup> wine

**Functions:** Enriches kidney yin and nourishes liver blood, brightens the eyes and strengthens the sinews and bones

<sup>5</sup> *Radix Astragali* (*Huang Qi*)

<sup>6</sup> For all the following recipes, one can use the alcohol of one's choice. This can be vodka, brandy, cognac, or whiskey. For a less strong "wine," one can also use saké or Chinese rice wine.

<sup>7</sup> *Fructus Jujubae* (*Da Zao* or *Hong Zao*)

<sup>8</sup> *Fructus Lycii* (*Gou Qi Zi*)

**Indications:** Liver-kidney yin vacuity with poor or decreasing eyesight, low back pain, sore, tight tendons, brittle nails, etc.

**Ingredients:** Goji berries, 300 grams, alcohol, 2 quarts

**Method of preparation & administration:** Place the Goji berries in a large jar and soak in the alcohol for two months. Later, open, remove the dregs, and store the tincture for use. Take 1-2 ounces before or after meals.

### **Ginseng<sup>9</sup> wine**

**Functions:** Greatly supplements the source qi, supplements the qi of all five viscera, and quiets the spirit

**Indications:** Qi vacuity with shortness of breath, fatigue, lack of strength, lack of appetite, loose stools, heart palpitations on exertion, poor memory, insomnia, dizziness after standing up

**Ingredients:** Ginseng, 300 grams, alcohol, 2 quarts

**Method of preparation & administration:** Place the Ginseng root in a large jar and soak in two quarts alcohol for 1-2 months, the longer the better. Seal the lid. Later, open and use. Typically, the Ginseng is left in the bottle or jar. When the first batch of wine is used, one can refill the bottle with fresh alcohol and repeat the process. The resulting tincture will be weaker but have the same general effects. Take one small Chinese teacup 1-3 times per day.

### **Longan<sup>10</sup> wine**

**Functions:** Supplements the heart and nourishes the blood

**Indications:** Blood vacuity excessive worry and anxiety, heart palpitations, insomnia, dry, wrinkled skin. This is considered a "beautifying" wine for women.

**Ingredients:** Longans, a large handful, alcohol, 1 quart

**Method of preparation & administration:** Place the Longans in a jar and soak in alcohol for one month or more. Then open the jar, remove the dregs and store the tincture for use. Take one small Chinese teacup per day in the evening before bed.

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<sup>9</sup> Radix Ginseng (*Ren Shen*)

<sup>10</sup> *Arillus Longanae* (*Long Yan Rou*)



## Special Issues When It Comes to Eating Healthily in Developed Countries 8

There are a number of special issues that need to be addressed when speaking about Chinese dietary therapy in 21<sup>st</sup> century developed nations and especially in the West. These are issues that traditionally Chinese doctors either did not know about or did not have to take into account. Nevertheless, these are issues that many readers of this book may have questions about or are struggling with.

### Obesity

Since originally writing this book, the issue of obesity has become even more important in Western and other developed/developing countries.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is even more appropriate to discuss this issue specifically in a book about Chinese dietary therapy aimed at readers in such countries. In Chinese medicine, fat is yin since it is an accumulation of substance. Specifically, Chinese medicine holds that excessive fat or adipose tissue is made up of phlegm, dampness, and turbidity. As we have already seen, it is the Chinese medical spleen which is charged with the movement and transformation of dampness. If dampness lingers and endures, it congeals into phlegm. Thus it is said in Chinese medicine that the spleen is the root of phlegm production. There-

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<sup>1</sup> See the statistics on obesity in the U.S. in Chapter 4

fore, Chinese dietary therapy's approach to the treatment of obesity revolves around improving the spleen's movement and transformation of body fluids and its clean and complete distillation of foods. As mentioned previously, it is said in the *Nei Jing (Inner Classic)* that the *yang ming* (yang brilliance) begins to decline at around the age of 35. Usually, the *yang ming* means the stomach and intestines, but it can also stand for the entire process of digestion including Chinese medical's spleen function. It is a well-known fact that one's metabolism begins to slow down at around 40 and that, even if one eats the same foods and does the same exercises, it is not uncommon to put on 10 pounds or more at that time.<sup>2</sup> The *Nei Jing* also says that in women at around 49 and in men at around 64, the kidneys begin their decline.<sup>3</sup> The kidney fire or life-gate fire is the ultimate source of spleen yang or digestive fire. That means that a further gain in weight is also common as the kidneys produce less warmth and, therefore, the body's metabolism or warm transformations slow down even more.

*Regular, moderate exercise can significantly improve digestion and thus disinhibit the spleen's movement or circulation of dampness and liquids and the spleen's transformation of phlegm or fat.*

The key to the Chinese dietary treatment of obesity, whether it be life-long and congenital or due to aging, is to eat easily digestible foods and to keep the fire of digestion as strong and as efficient as possible. That means not eating too many sweet, damp, and greasy, fatty foods. It also means not eating too many cold-natured and chilled foods or drinking chilled liquids but rather drinking a small amount of warm liquids with meals. In addition, because the digestion becomes less efficient with age, it becomes all the more important not to overeat and, there-

fore, jam the qi mechanism. Regular exercise keeps the qi, blood, and body fluids flowing. As the qi flows, the stomach and intestines conduct the dregs of foods and liquids downward for excretion. It is well known that exercise aids peristalsis and Chinese medical theory supports this fact. Exercise also warms the body up the same way that blowing on a dying fire can rekindle it. Regular, moderate exercise can significantly improve digestion and thus disinhibit the spleen's movement or circulation of dampness and liquids and the spleen's transformation of phlegm or fat. The word "transform" in Chinese is *hua* (化). *Hua* also means to melt. It implies a warm transformation. It is interesting to note that we also talk about melting fat away in colloquial English.

<sup>2</sup> The number of calories you need for energy decreases as your metabolism slows and the amount of muscle you have decreases. Because muscle burns more calories than fat the less muscle you have, the fewer calories you burn.  
[http://www.womenfitness.net/menopause\\_weightgain.htm](http://www.womenfitness.net/menopause_weightgain.htm), last retrieved 2/5/2008

<sup>3</sup> These ages should not be taken as gospel. They are approximate and depend on individual constitution, diet, and lifestyle.

New diet programs come and go on a regular basis. Many of them just simply do not work for the majority of people. For instance, drinking copious amounts of cold water before meals in an attempt to fill oneself up only floods the spleen with more dampness. Likewise, drinking large amounts of grapefruit juice only causes the spleen to become damp, sodden, and inefficient. Some of the liquid diet programs currently available and highly touted can be good, but often they include psyllium seeds and oat bran which are both very dampening to the intestines according to Chinese dietary theory. When these are mixed with milk or citrus juices, they can be counter-productive regardless of the number of calories they provide. Although, outside the body, calories are calories, not all foods are digested the same way once inside the body. Professional practitioners of Chinese medicine can individually assess each patient's Chinese condition and should be able to tell if a particular diet plan or a particular meal replacement formula is appropriate for a given individual.

### **Good & Less Good Chinese Medical Methods for Losing Weight**

Even in Chinese medicine there are wise and less wise ways to go about shedding weight. Within Chinese herbal medicine, there are basically three approaches to weight loss. One approach is to give cold purgatives which essentially chill out the spleen-stomach so that food runs right through one.<sup>4</sup> One loses weight because food is not digested after being eaten. However, since life is warm and since the spleen and stomach are the foundation of the latter heaven or postnatal acquisition of qi and blood, this is a risky approach. It can lead to chronic injury of the stomach-spleen in persons whose spleen-stomachs are typically already functioning below par.

A second risky approach is to use acrid, warm, and dry diaphoretics which cause essence to be transformed into qi which is then dispersed upward and outward from the body. In this process, the lungs become hyperactive and discharge fluids and dampness through perspiration and urination. This method is essentially the Chinese equivalent of speed and can cause weakening of the kidneys, exhaustion of essence, and weakening of the lungs. If Olympic athletes use this method and these herbs, notably *Herba Ephedrae* (*Ma Huang*, the vegetable source of ephedrine), they can be disqualified from their meets. This method is no different or safer than using dextrin or methamphetamines.

In fact, since the last edition of this book, *Herba Ephedrae* has been banned from over-

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<sup>4</sup> Such as rhubarb root (*Radix Et Rhizoma Rhei*, *Du Huang*)

the-counter dietary supplements due to a number of deaths of athletes. For instance, in February 2003, ephedra was linked to the death of 23-year-old Baltimore Orioles pitcher Steve Bechler. According to the results of an evidence-based review on the efficacy and safety of ephedra and ephedrine alkaloids for weight loss or to enhance athletic performance published by the Office of Dietary Supplements of the National Institutes of Health, there were two deaths, three myocardial infarctions, nine cerebrovascular/stroke events, three seizures, and five psychiatric cases due to prior consumption of *Herba Ephedrae*, with an additional 43 cases identified as possible sentinel events with prior ephedra consumption.<sup>5</sup>

The third approach which, in my opinion, is safer for more people is to use Chinese herbs which benefit digestion and gently seep dampness through increased urination but without causing either drastic purgation of the bowels or exhaustion of essence. Although the first two methods can be used safely by some patients for a limited length of time, they should be administered only on the basis of a professional Chinese medical diagnosis, and their use should be monitored continuously. Whereas, the third method of strengthening the spleen, disinhibiting dampness, and transforming phlegm can be safely employed by almost anyone.

## Green Tea & Weight Loss

It is believed in China that drinking moderate amounts of green tea with meals is very helpful to digestion and can reduce obesity. Green tea is unfermented, whereas black tea is cured and fermented. According to Chinese medicine, green tea strengthens the spleen and disinhibits dampness as well as transforms phlegm. However, drinking green tea alone is not an effective weight loss strategy. Research by Japanese and other researchers suggest that, if the average person were to drink five cups of green tea per day, they would burn an extra 70-80 extra calories through an effect known as thermogenesis—the process of heat production in organisms. While much of this thermogenesis effect in green tea is derived from caffeine, studies also suggest that thermogenesis in green tea occurs to some degree beyond its caffeine content from epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG.). Seventy to 80 calories per day does not quite come close to the 500 calorie deficit

<sup>5</sup> A sentinel event is any unanticipated event in a healthcare setting resulting in death or serious physical or psychological injury to a person or persons, not related to the natural course of the patient's illness.

Ephedra and Ephedrine Alkaloids for Weight Loss and Athletic Performance, Office of Dietary Supplements National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, National Institutes of Health, <http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/EphedraandEphedrine.asp>, last retrieved 2/5/2008

needed per day to lose a pound a week, and for sure it is nowhere close to the calorie deficit needed to lose "inches per week" from one's waistline as some green tea web sites would have consumers believe. According to the above research, if a person were to change nothing outside of adding five cups of green tea to their diet per day, then over the course of 43 days one could expect to lose one pound. Over the period of one year, one could expect a loss of about eight pounds. Clearly, drinking green tea alone is not going to be satisfactory for significant weight loss. That said, green tea can still be quite useful as a weight loss aid. The extra 80 calories per day can be just what a person needs to tip the scale from a calorie surplus to a calorie deficit, especially when following a balanced nutrition and exercise regime.<sup>6</sup>

*Clearly, drinking green tea alone is not going to be satisfactory for significant weight loss. That said, green tea can still be quite useful as a weight loss aid.*

Another helpful, dampness-disinhibiting tea can be made from Job's tears barley (Semen Coicis, *Yi Yi Ren*). This grain, when taken as a dilute soup or decoction, also strengthens the spleen, disinhibits dampness, promotes drainage of pathologic dampness through urination, and seems to have some preventive ability against cancer.

Therefore, Chinese dietary therapy suggests that those struggling with unwanted weight should eat a diet high in lightly cooked vegetables, high in fiber and complex carbohydrates, mostly warm and easy-to-digest foods spiced with herbs that aid digestion, and should avoid foods which tend to be damp, phlegmatic, cold, or hard to digest. In addition, one should get more exercise and should consider getting acupuncture or Chinese herbal treatment to strengthen the fire of their digestion. Professional practitioners of Chinese medicine can also usually instruct patients in one or more systems of abdominal self-massage which can likewise stoke the fires of digestion and get the pot of the stomach boiling healthily again. For more information on Chinese medicine and weight loss, see *Chinese Medicine & Healthy Weight Management* by Juliette Ayana, LAc., also available from Blue Poppy Press.

## Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a lipid or fatty component of all cellular membranes and is required to support cellular integrity and for the biosynthesis of vital hormones. However, because high levels of cholesterol in the blood are associated with increased risk and in-

<sup>6</sup> About Green Tea and Weight Loss, <http://www.o-cha.com/green-tea-weight-loss.htm> last retrieved 2/5/2008

cidence of coronary heart and cerebrovascular disease, high serum levels of cholesterol have become a national obsession in the United States. Therefore, many middle-aged and older Americans consciously attempt to eat a low-cholesterol diet. However, the question of cholesterol includes some little understood facts. Although Chinese medicine has no concept of cholesterol *per se*, still Western facts regarding cholesterol and diet can be seen through the lens of Chinese medicine.

First, cholesterol is a nutrient in foods. It is a hormone precursor and so it is found especially in animal foods. However, cholesterol is also manufactured in our bodies besides what we eat. In fact, 80% of cholesterol in our body is internally produced by the liver;<sup>7</sup> and this endogenous production is directly related to levels of stress. When we are under stress, our metabolism gears up. The orders for such gearing up are dependent upon hormonal regulation and many important hormones are synthesized from cholesterol. This is evidenced by the fact that many hormones have steroid or sterol in their name, such as the corticosteroids. This is the same sterol as in cholesterol. The corticosteroids are manufactured in the adrenal cortex sitting on top of the kidneys. These corticosteroids are often referred to as fight or flight hormones. They are the hormones most closely associated with stress reactions in the body. Their manufacture is part of the body's coping mechanism for dealing with stresses of all kinds. What this means is that anything which stresses the body can cause an elevation in cholesterol production as a precursor to producing corticosteroids.

This means that high serum cholesterol levels are not simply a matter of high dietary cholesterol. A person's cholesterol is also a function of their level of stress. Eating sugar, drinking coffee and tea, and drinking alcohol are all stressful to the adrenal glands. From a Chinese medical point of view, coffee, tea, and alcohol liberate a lot of yang qi. Therefore, the body's response is to try to secrete more yin substance. Cholesterol is one such yin substance which becomes pathologic when excessive. Sugar, on the other hand, directly causes the secretion of yin dampness or pathologic substance.

Although eating a diet high in saturated fats can also cause the body to accumulate dampness and phlegm or pathologic yin substance, it is usually not necessary to become fanatical about avoiding all foods containing cholesterol. For instance, eggs have gotten a very bad rap lately because of their high cholesterol content. Chinese medicine believes that

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<sup>7</sup> Cholesterol, Hypertension, and Stress, [http://www.drlam.com/A3R\\_brief\\_in\\_doc\\_format/2000-No6-Cholesterol.cfm](http://www.drlam.com/A3R_brief_in_doc_format/2000-No6-Cholesterol.cfm), last retrieved 2/5/2008



eggs are a very nutritious food. Specifically, they are a yin supplement. If a person is able to keep their level of stress under control and avoids sugar, alcohol, coffee, and tea, I believe they can eat a modicum of eggs and certainly more than many people think presently.

I have seen a number of patients with high cholesterol who were on very low cholesterol, restrictive diets and still could not get their cholesterol down. Within weeks after eliminating refined sugars and refined carbohydrates from their diets, all of these patients have been able to reduce their cholesterol levels to within safe limits. At that point, they were able to add back into their diet a modicum of cholesterol-containing foods, such as eggs, and their cholesterol did not increase as long as they avoided sugar.

Therefore, although I agree that one should not eat too many saturated fats, fatty meats, or too many eggs, avoiding sugar and sweets and reducing stress are equally important in maintaining healthy serum cholesterol levels. In Chinese medical terms, cholesterol is a pure yin substance associated with the kidney essence. However, when excessive, it becomes a pathologic yin composed of dampness and phlegm. Therefore, the key to keeping it under healthy control is to keep yang from becoming overly stressed and yin from being excessively produced.

*...although I agree that one should not eat too many saturated fats, fatty meats, or too many eggs, avoiding sugar and sweets and reducing stress are equally important in maintaining healthy serum cholesterol levels.*

## Food Allergies

Food allergies are a common diagnosis among Westerners and especially those who seek their health care from so-called alternative practitioners, such as chiropractors, naturopaths, and homeopaths. In Chinese medicine there is no such disease category as food allergies. That is not to say there are no food allergies but that Chinese medicine does not traditionally categorize the signs and symptoms of such allergies as a distinct disease. In part this is because, in my experience, Chinese are far less prone to food allergies than Westerners.<sup>8</sup> I believe this is so, exactly because traditional Chinese dietary sense is so much better in general than contemporary Western dietary sense. Most Chinese know more about the good and bad effects of food and know better how to eat healthily than most Westerners. Therefore, they have less problems due to eating the wrong foods at the wrong time.

<sup>8</sup> While this may have been true when this book was first written, it may not be true now. This is because of China's rapid development with both increased consumption of sugars and sweets, increased use of antibiotics, and increased use of corticosteroids.

Most food allergies begin in infancy where our current Western lack of nutritional sense is most glaring and apparent. Chinese medical theory states that the child's spleen or their digestion is immature until approximately six years of age. When a person is a beginner at something with undeveloped skills and abilities, we normally recognize the need to start off slowly and easily until one develops the requisite skills and abilities. Babies need to be fed "beginner's" foods. That means mother's milk, watered down cereal soups, mashed, cooked vegetables, and small amounts of animal soups and broths. Instead, we ply our infants with cold fruit juices, raw carrots, apples, oranges, cheese, fried foods and chips, peanut butter, and cold milk and sweetened yogurt out of the refrigerator.

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, such foods are very dampening and relatively hard to digest. These foods may be very nutritious for a grownup with a strong digestion, but they are very difficult to digest for a child below the age of six. Nonetheless, this is standard fare at most daycare centers and is all too often what our children are given at home. Because these things are damp and hard-to-digest, they further impair the digestion and tend to cause phlegm and dampness which clog the system. When the flow of qi and blood which are inherently warm get blocked by phlegm and dampness, this heat is transferred to the pathologic accumulations thus causing damp heat and hot phlegm.

Most food allergies manifest according to Chinese medicine as some version of spleen vacuity with heat and/or dampness and phlegm. It is no wonder then that the foods which are most prone to causing food allergies are those which are the most dampening and phlegmatic. In a study conducted by Dr. Frederic Speer on 1,000 patients, he found that milk, chocolate, cola, citrus, corn, and egg were the most common food allergens.

- **Milk** allergies are especially common in children under two. Milk is very dampening according to Chinese dietary theory. Therefore, milk, cheese, and all dairy products tend to aggravate dampness and impede the spleen. If one's digestion is sound, these are very nutritious foods, but it is their very nutritiousness which also causes them to be dampening if one has insufficient spleen qi to distill their dampness.
- **Chocolate**, which is extremely bitter, is rarely eaten alone. It is usually eaten in combination with sugar and tropical, hydrogenated oils. Chocolate by itself is warm and supplements the life-gate fire. When eaten with oils and sugars which are extremely dampening, chocolate tends to foster damp heat within the body. Again, this is es-

pecially the case with children whose digestion is not capable of moving and transforming so much dampness and sweets.

- Cola is made from a combination of sugars and spices, including cinnamon, orange peel, and vanilla. These spices are warm and when eaten with foods are actually digestive aids. However, when taken with sugar water which overwhelms the baby's spleen, they too tend to cause damp heat.
- Citrus fruits and juices are sweet and sour. These are the two flavors which in combination tend to be the most dampening according to Chinese five phase theory. Drinking the concentrated essence of oranges, grapefruits, pineapples, and lemons is like mainlining pathogenic dampness. This is especially the case in infants whose yang qi is still struggling to organize and permeate the dampness of their unstructured yin substance.
- Corn is sweet with a level or neutral temperature according to Chinese medicine. It is this neutral temperature which makes corn difficult to digest in the newborn besides its tough exterior and the baby's lack of teeth. Because corn lacks its own warmth and yet tends to be dampening because of its sweetness, and since the baby's spleen yang or warmth is weak, this dampness engendered by corn is difficult for the baby to transport and transform.
- Eggs are likewise highly nutritious. They have a lot of *wei* or flavor as compared to qi. They are a wet, mucousy food which supplements yin and blood. This all adds up to a propensity to be dampening if one's fire of digestion does not burn strongly.
- Other foods which cause food allergies and especially in children are **soy products**. Soybeans are sweet like corn but even cooler. They are quite dampening according to Chinese dietary theory. On the one hand, that makes them nutritious, but, on the other, that makes them hard to digest.

If one is fed or allowed to eat the wrong foods as a child, this can cause chronic spleen dampness and weakness. In Chinese medicine, it is said that dampness is heavy and turbid and hard to resolve. Once pathologic dampness is engendered in the spleen and body as a whole, it is difficult to rid. Therefore, dampness and phlegm engendered as a child may persist into adulthood, especially if one continues to eat the wrong, i.e., damp

and difficult to digest, foods. When such foods are eaten, they cause even more dampness and possibly heat and the signs and symptoms of allergy appear.

Although Chinese medicine has no category of disease called food allergies, its theory nonetheless explains why certain people experience certain signs and symptoms when they eat certain foods. Allergenic foods almost without exception tend to be dampening and hard-to-digest. If one has such a food allergy, it is important to identify the worst offending foods and avoid these. At the same time, a warm, digestion-benefitting diet should be eaten to strengthen the spleen and transform and eliminate chronic dampness. It may take a seemingly long time, but eventually it is possible to strengthen the spleen and eliminate dampness to the point that a moderate amount of the previously allergenic foods can be added back into the diet. However, it should be noted that such highly nutritious, dampening foods should not be eaten too frequently nor in too large amounts by anyone. They are immoderate foods which tend to be too yin to eat too much of.

## Candidiasis

Many Westerners suffer from candidiasis.<sup>9</sup> Candidiasis is an overgrowth of intestinal yeast. *Candida albicans* are a normal, saprophytic yeast which live in the large intestine and act as scavengers metabolizing debris. However, if they proliferate out of control and if the lining of the intestines becomes too permeable, these yeasts can infiltrate and migrate throughout the body. They can cause cystitis and vaginitis, sinusitis, thrush, skin diseases, and a host of other problems. Even if they just stay in the guts, they can cause chronic indigestion, flatulence, constipation or loose stools, fatigue, malaise, and depression. In addition, overgrowth of *Candida albicans* can cause imbalance in the endocrine system. The endocrine system regulates the hormones and endocrine imbalance can disrupt the menstrual cycle in women causing PMS, early periods, and dysmenorrhea. The endocrine system also regulates the immune system and, therefore, candidiasis can play a very important role in chronic infectious diseases, various viral diseases, and in cancer.

Chinese medicine does recognize the existence of *Candida albicans*. Chinese medicine says that this parasite, or *gu chong* (蟲虫) in Chinese, lives in the intestines and stomach.

<sup>9</sup> Since originally writing this book, candidiasis is not as common a diagnosis. Instead, leaky-gut syndrome and intestinal dysbiosis have taken its place. However, the manifestations of these conditions are essentially the same as what was more popularly called candidiasis. Therefore, most of what appears here also applies to these more contemporaneously popular diagnoses.

Further, Chinese medicine believes that it is great spleen vacuity along with excessive dampness and heat which provides the environment for run away proliferation of such *gu chong*. In Chinese medicine, candidiasis is always associated with spleen dampness and weakness with a tendency to damp heat. As we have seen above, dampness is caused by overeating foods which weaken the spleen and engender too much dampness. This includes sugar and refined carbohydrates and citrus fruits and juices. Damp heat *per se* is aggravated by alcohol which is both damp and hot.

*In Chinese medicine, candidiasis is always associated with spleen dampness and weakness with a tendency to damp heat. As we have seen above, dampness is caused by overeating foods which weaken the spleen and engender too much dampness.*

Once one has candidiasis, it is important to stay away from eating any foods which tend to be spleen-weakening, damp-engendering, or damp heat-fostering. Also, one should avoid foods contaminated by yeast and fungus. This includes all fermented foods, all yeasted baked goods, and anything with vinegar in it. Foods fermented with acidophilus, such as miso, are usually alright. However, because yogurt is made with milk and is, therefore, dampening, it may be contraindicated in certain individuals. If one has a bad case of candidiasis, fungicidal medicines, whether these be herbal, pharmaceutical or homeopathic, are often necessary. Some authorities suggest a high protein diet but this may aggravate dampness and heat. Therefore, it is best to eat the basic healthy Chinese maintenance diet described in Chapter 3 but being careful to avoid all yeasted and fermented foods and all dampening, spleen-weakening foods. This means an emphasis on cooked vegetables and complex carbohydrates supplemented by some lean, animal protein.

Other useful books for the lay reader on candidiasis include William G. Crook's *The Yeast Connection* and Trowbridge & Walker's *The Yeast Syndrome*.

## Coffee

In Chinese medicine, coffee is classified as a bitter, acrid, and warm exterior-resolving medicinal. Exterior-resolvers are basically diaphoretics. These medicinals work by transforming kidney yin or essence into qi which is then liberated upward and outward through the system. As these move outward through the body's various energetic layers, they flood the organs within these layers with yang qi and so one experiences increased energy. In addition, this yang qi moving upward and outward promotes the flow of all the qi of the body, liberating stuck qi and with it activating blood and body fluids.

People who are either producing less qi from their daily diet, are using more qi through hyperactivity than they make each day, fail to store the qi they make because of disturbed sleep, or who lack access to their qi because of its being bound up or stagnant will all experience temporary access to abundant qi and the sense of energy and flow that go along with that when they drink coffee. However, because coffee is warm by nature, it tends to heat the stomach. This results in coffee's causing hot loose stools in many people with an attendant loss of spleen qi. Because coffee stimulates the lungs' participation in the downward transportation of body fluids to the bladder, it is also a diuretic. Each time we urinate, we lose qi since urine does not just dribble out but is transported. This means that we also lose warmth since qi is yang and, therefore, warm. Such diuresis weakens kidney yang at the same time as coffee steals kidney yin or essence.

*When coffee was first introduced into Europe, there were prohibition movements and laws based on the recognition that coffee is a powerful and not wholly benign drug. Although coffee has certain legitimate medical and emergency uses, its use as a daily beverage is not very wise.*

Coffee, therefore, has a debilitating effect on both the middle and lower burners. Spleen qi is lost and kidney yin and yang are exhausted. Using coffee as an energy boost is like continually dipping into one's savings or capital. Eventually such profligate deficit spending leaves one's internal economy bankrupt. When coffee transforms and liberates essence qi, one gets a rush but ultimately loses that precious stored energy. When coffee was first introduced into Europe, there were prohibition movements and laws based on the recognition that coffee is a powerful and not wholly benign drug. Although coffee has certain legitimate medical and emergency uses, its use as a daily beverage is not very wise. It is my belief that if coffee were to be introduced to the

West today as a new discovery, governmental agencies, such as the FDA in the United States, would restrict its use as a controlled substance. Since the government of the United States cannot, due to economic pressures, outlaw cigarette smoking which has incontestably been shown to be linked to lung cancer, it is even less likely that this common beverage could be prohibited at this late date. However, except as a medicinal and in cases where the use of speed is warranted knowing full well the risks its use entails, I believe coffee has no place in the everyday diet of those hoping to be healthy.

Women especially do well to avoid coffee. Because of the violent upward dispersal coffee initiates in the body, it seems to injure the *chong mai* (冲脉) or so-called penetrating vessel. The *chong mai* is an energy pathway running up the very core of the body con-

necting the kidneys to the heart. The purpose of this pathway is to feed kidney yang to the heart where it is transformed into the light of consciousness or *shen ming* (神明). It also leads kidney yin upwards to provide the nourishment and substantial support for the “higher” activities of consciousness and sensation. In injuring this connection between above and below, heart and kidneys, and exhausting yin, blood, and righteous body fluids, coffee tends to cause accumulations in women’s breasts above and in their pelvises below. Although controlled tests have so far not confirmed this fact, their results are, in my opinion, due to a flaw in their design and logic, since every astute clinician knows from experience that coffee negatively affects women’s breasts and reproductive organs.

## Nutritional Supplements

When I first began practicing Chinese medicine, I, like most converts to a new belief system, strove to hew to a very pure, traditional Chinese practice. I perceived things like Western vitamin and mineral supplements as incompatible with such a pure, traditional approach. This was in the face of the fact that Chinese practitioners of Chinese medicine do not have any problem with using vitamin and mineral supplements. At that time, I confused Chinese medicine as a system of thought with medicines which come from China. These are not necessarily the same thing.

In Chinese medicine, probably as much as 20% of the standard repertoire of 500 medicinal substances originated outside of China. Spices such as cardamon, cloves, nutmeg, and cinnamon came from southeast and southwest Asia and the Spice Islands. Apricot, peach, and prune pits came from Central Asia and the Mideast. Licorice came from southern Russia. Cinchona bark came from the Andes. Eagleswood, saffron, and terminalia came from India and the Himalayas. And American ginseng and greater celandine came from the United States and Canada.

In addition, Chinese medicinals (*yao*, 药) are not all herbal (*cao*, 草) in origin. Rather they come from all three kingdoms—animal, vegetable, and mineral. Further, Chinese doctors did not and do not only use naturally occurring medicinal substances found in their raw form. Chinese doctors and pharmacists have for centuries studied and employed a host of processing and refining techniques in order to make their medicinals more powerful and concentrated with less side effects and toxicity. So-called Chinese herbal medicine was largely the product of Daoist alchemists who were also the progenitors of the science of chemistry.



Therefore, there is no Chinese precedent for thinking that a practitioner of so-called Chinese medicine must only prescribe medicinals which originate in China, medicinals originating from vegetable or herbal sources, or naturally occurring substances in their raw or unprocessed form. That means there is no *a priori* reason vitamins and minerals cannot be incorporated into the contemporary practice of Chinese medicine.

When vitamins, minerals, amino acids, enzymes, coenzymes, fatty acids, and co-factors are used medicinally, these are referred to as orthomolecular supplements. Orthomolecular means the same molecules as the body itself. Orthomolecular supplements are essentially concentrations of nutrient substances normally found in the foods we eat. Many people ask, if vitamins and minerals are simply found in the foods we eat, why can't we get enough of these in our daily diet? That is a good question and one which can be easily answered.

First of all, many people in the West do not eat a healthy and balanced diet. We tend not to eat enough fresh vegetables and we tend to eat too much sugar, protein, and fats. These foods cause us to use up inordinate amounts of certain other nutrients. For instance, if one eats lots of meat, one needs more calcium. And sugar causes us to use up more zinc.

Secondly, many of the foods we eat are grown in poor soil due to excessive use of chemical fertilizers and other modern but shortsighted farming practices. This is compounded by the fact that many people today eat foods which have been prepared and stored by canning, freezing, and dehydrating which cause some loss of vitamins and enzymes.

*Fourth, most of us living in urban environments are subject to large amounts of mental and emotional stress. It is my belief that simply living in the urban West is more than our nervous systems are capable of dealing with in a healthy way.*

Third, we are exposed to toxic chemicals in our air, water, and food which are a type of extra stress on our systems requiring extra nutrients to neutralize these.

Fourth, most of us living in urban environments are subject to large amounts of mental and emotional stress. It is my belief that simply living in the urban West is more than our nervous systems are capable of dealing with in a healthy way. There are just too many and unrelieved stresses which are constantly assaulting us. Such stress uses up inordinate amounts of B vitamins and minerals.



Fifth, if one drinks coffee or alcohol, smokes cigarettes, is exposed to radiation, is taking certain medications, such as oral birth control pills, or is suffering from a chronic illness, and especially a digestive complaint, any one of these is using up abnormally large amounts of certain nutrients or is not absorbing others from their food.

For all these reasons, one may need to supplement certain nutrients which are not adequately found in their diet. This does not mean that if one gobbles lots of vitamins one does not need to eat a healthy diet. What it does mean is that, given the stressful, polluted world we live in, we may not be getting enough vital nutrients simply from our diet.

Over the last dozen years, I have attempted to develop preliminary Chinese medical descriptions of all the common vitamins, minerals, and amino acids. Using these descriptions, Western practitioners of Chinese medicine might prescribe orthomolecular supplements based on a Chinese medical diagnosis just as if they were prescribing Chinese herbs. Although this is not something I suggest laypersons do for themselves, I have included this brief discussion of orthomolecular supplements in this layperson's guide to Chinese dietary therapy primarily to let patients know that such supplements are consistent with the practice of Chinese medicine. They are a useful adjunct to other, more standard Chinese medical therapies and should not be overlooked simply because they are not "Chinese." These descriptions emphasize that Chinese medicine is more a system of thinking about health and disease than a collection of exotic treatments from the Far East.

## Chinese Medical Functions of Vitamins

**Vitamin A:** Supplements the blood and fills the essence, brightens the eyes and clears heat from the blood; treats vacuity heat patterns.

**Vitamin B1:** Courses the liver and rectifies the qi, fortifies the spleen and dries dampness, stops pain.

**Vitamin B2:** Nourishes the liver and supplements the kidneys, engenders fluids and boosts the stomach.

**Vitamin B3:** Soothes the liver and harmonizes the stomach, fortifies the spleen and clears heat from the stomach, upbears the clear and frees the flow of the qi mechanism.

**Vitamin B5:** Courses the liver and rectifies the qi, clears heat and resolves depression, supplements the spleen and harmonizes the stomach.

**Vitamin B6:** Courses the liver and rectifies the qi, clears heat and resolves depression, harmonizes wood and earth, clears heat from the stomach and damp heat from the gallbladder.

**Vitamin B12:** Supplements the qi and nourishes the blood, stops bleeding.

**Vitamin B15:** Rectifies and moves the qi, quickens the blood and transforms stasis.

**Biotin:** Nourishes the blood and emolliates the liver, supplements the heart and quiets the spirit.

**Choline:** Nourishes the blood and extinguishes wind, strengthens the sinews and bones, moistens the intestines and frees the flow of the stool.

**Folic acid:** Nourishes the blood and harmonizes the liver, quiets the spirit and the fetus.

**Inositol:** Nourishes the blood, moistens the intestines, and quiets the spirit.

**PABA:** Supplements the liver and kidneys, moistens the intestines and frees the flow of the stool, dispels wind, blackens the hair, and retards aging.

**Vitamin C:** Clears heat and stops bleeding, clears heat and resolves toxins, clears heat from the heart and quiets the spirit.

**Vitamin D:** Supplements the kidneys and invigorates yang, strengthens the sinews and bones, brightens the eyes and quiets the fetus.

**Vitamin E:** Nourishes the blood and supplements yang, strengthens the sinews and bones.

**Vitamin K:** Secures and astringes the lungs and large intestine, stops bleeding.

**Bioflavonoids:** Clears heat from the blood and stops bleeding, quickens the blood and transforms stasis.

**Beta-carotene:** Courses the liver and rectifies the qi, clears heat and resolves toxins, disperses stagnations and accumulations, combats cancer.

## Chinese Medical Functions of Minerals

**Calcium:** Astringes yin and suppresses yang, strengthens the bones and promotes the generation of new tissue, absorbs acid and stops pain.

**Chromium:** Fortifies the spleen and boosts the qi, supplements the qi and blood.

**Cobalt:** Supplements the qi to transform blood.

**Copper:** Fortifies the spleen and seeps dampness, clears and eliminates damp heat.

**Flourine:** Supplements the kidneys and enriches yin, strengthens the bones and teeth.

**Iodine:** Courses the liver and rectifies the qi, clears heat and scatters nodulation.

**Iron:** Clears heat and cools the blood, quickens the blood and transforms stasis.

**Magnesium:** Astringes yin and suppresses yang, quiets the spirit, absorbs acid, and stops pain.

**Manganese:** Nourishes the liver and enriches the kidneys, strengthens the sinews and bones, sharpens the hearing.

**Molybdenum:** Nourishes the blood and enriches yin, clears heat and cools the blood.

**Phosphorus:** Supplements the kidneys and enriches yin, strengthens the sinews and bones.

**Potassium:** Fortifies the spleen and seeps dampness, clears heat and expels pus, dispels wind dampness, clears and eliminates damp heat.

**Selenium:** Astringes yin and suppresses yang, quiets the spirit and brightens the eyes.

**Silica:** Supplements the kidneys and strengthens the bones.

**Silicon:** Supplements the liver and kidneys and strengthens the sinews and bones.

**Sodium:** Supplements the liver and kidneys and secures the essence, softens hardness and scatters nodulation.

**Sulfur:** Supplements the kidneys and warms yang, blackens the hair and benefits the skin.

**Zinc:** Nourishes the liver and enriches the kidneys, strengthens the bones and brightens the eyes.

## Chinese Medical Functions of Amino Acids

**Alanine:** Fortifies the spleen and boosts the qi, nourishes the heart and quiets the spirit.

**Arginine:** Supplements the kidneys and invigorates yang, moistens the intestines and frees the flow of the stool, strengthens the sinews and bones and dispels wind cold dampness.

**BCAA** (Leucine, Isoleucine & Valine): Supplements the kidneys and enriches yin.

**Carnitine:** Supplements the blood and yin.

**Cysteine:** Nourishes the liver and enriches the kidneys, clears heat and cools the blood, clears heat and resolves toxins, blackens the hair and promotes the generation of new tissue.

**Glutamic acid:** Supplements the kidneys and enriches yin.

**Glutathione:** Clears heat and resolves toxins, clears heat and cools the blood, promotes lactation.

**Glycine:** Supplements the blood and promotes the growth of new tissue.

**Histidine:** Supplements the blood and yin, may clear heat and cool the blood.

**Lysine:** Supplements the blood and yin, may clear heat and resolve toxins.

**Methionine:** Nourishes and cools the blood, soothes the liver and quiets the spirit.

**Ornithine:** Supplements yang.

**Phenylalanine:** Resolves the exterior and clears heat, clears heat and resolves toxins, moves the qi and stops pain.

**Taurine:** Clears heat and resolves toxins, drains the liver and clears damp heat from the gallbladder; promotes lactation.

**Threonine:** Nourishes the blood and extinguishes wind, soothes the liver and relieves tension and contractions.

**Tryptophan:** Courses the liver and resolves depression, quickens the blood and transforms stasis, quiets the spirit and stops pain.

**Tyrosine:** Courses the liver and rectifies the qi, harmonizes wood and earth.

Because the basic methodology of Chinese medicine is to prescribe the equal opposite force necessary to bring a person back into healthy balance, if one knows that they are too hot, then taking vitamin C makes perfect sense according to the logic of Chinese medicine. Conversely, because vitamin C is cold and clears heat, taking too much of it can damage the spleen and lead to spleen vacuity loose stools and diarrhea. In the same way, one can decide on who should take what amounts of the above vitamins, minerals, and amino acids. Because vitamin and mineral supplements

provide very concentrated doses of these ingredients, I believe they should be regarded as medicinals rather than as foods. This means that they should be prescribed with the same care and thought as any other medicinal, be that a Chinese herb or Western pharmaceutical. If something is strong enough to bring a person back to balance when necessary, then that same thing must also be strong enough to push a person out of balance when unnecessary or inappropriate. You can't have it both ways. So the stronger a medicinal is, the more care should be exercised in its choice and use.

The beauty of Chinese medicine is that, using its system of prescribing, one can tell exactly who needs what medicines in what amounts. Thus Chinese medicine, when correctly practiced, provides healing without side effects. Each person gets just the right treatment for their individual needs. This is exactly what makes Chinese medicine the safe and effective system of medicine it is and why it provides such a wonderful alternative and complement to modern Western medicine which tends to prescribe the same medicine for all persons with the same disease. Since each person is different from every other person, no one medicine, or nutritional supplement is going to be right for every person even with the same disease. And that is why one gets side effects.



When originally writing this book on Chinese dietary therapy, I coincidentally came across two things which I think support and underscore the importance of this approach. The first is a scientific study that compared the eating habits of 6,500 rural Chinese and their health with Western eating habits and Westerners' health. This study was undertaken jointly by Oxford University in England, the Chinese Academy for Preventive Medicine in Beijing, and Cornell University in the United States. It was called the Cornell-China-Oxford Project on Nutrition, Health and Environment and was the largest study of a nation's eating habits of this kind ever undertaken up to then. For two years, the subjects, aged 34-64, were interviewed about their eating and other health habits, such as drinking alcohol and smoking tobacco. Blood samples were taken to measure their cholesterol and other such things, dietary records were obtained, and foods consumed were weighed and measured. Ninety percent of the Chinese selected for this study were provincials who ate locally raised foods and stuck to a traditional diet. Among the important findings were the facts that:

1. Rural Chinese, at that time, consumed many more vegetables, grains, and fruits than either Americans or Britons.
2. The daily fiber intake of the average rural Chinese was three times higher than the average American.

3. The average rural Chinese derived anywhere from 6-24% of their daily calories from fat compared to 39% for the average American and 45% for the average Briton.
4. In most of the Chinese counties included in this study, people ate meat only once per week. In counties where meat was eaten more regularly, rates of cardiovascular disease were higher.
5. The Chinese in this study ate more total calories daily per pound of body weight than did their American counterparts but there was little obesity, certainly far less than in the U.S.
6. The average rural Chinese blood cholesterol level was only 127 milligrams per deciliter compared to 212 milligrams in the U.S.
7. The rates for chronic degenerative diseases at that time were much higher in the U.S. than in China. However, in those areas of China where the intake of animal-based foods was higher, so were the rates for these kinds of diseases.

I believe this study supports the fact that the Chinese do, or at least did have a special insight into diet and the maintenance of health. Based on the outcomes of this study, the Chinese government is currently taking active steps to keep this traditional diet from giving way to the high fat diet of the West.

The second piece of interesting evidence supporting the wisdom of the Chinese medical approach to healthy eating was published in *Newsweek* (May 27, 1991). The cover article of this issue was devoted to new attitudes about diet and health in the United States. According to that article, the USDA had created what it called the "Eating Right Pyramid." This was a graphic showing, in its preparers' opinion, the most healthy proportions of foods in one's daily diet. This pyramid made grains and complex carbohydrates the foundation of the diet. Next came vegetables and fruits. Then came dairy products and other animal proteins, and last, under the heading "Use Sparingly," came fats, oils, and sweets. This is very similar to the diet that Chinese medicine also suggests is the healthiest for most humans living in temperate climates. The only change I would make in this scheme is that I would emphasize more vegetables,



since, as a clinician, I know that even those Westerners trying to eat a healthy diet tend to eat too many grain products and too few vegetables. The same article quotes Bonnie Liebman, a nutritionist at the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), as saying: "For years, the National Academy of Sciences and the National Cancer Institute have been telling Americans to eat more vegetables." Says CSPI's Liebman, "Most of the meal should be grains, vegetables, and beans, and meats should be used as a condiment." Unfortunately but all too typically, then Secretary of Agriculture, Edward R. Madigan, suspended the publication of this chart presumably due to special interest pressure from the meat and dairy industries.

For sure, some "truths" are culturally limited. Certain mores and behavior may work in one culture or country but not in others. However, I have practiced Chinese medicine in Asia, America, and Europe, and I believe that Chinese medicine is a system of thought about human physiology which is so universally valid that its logic can be applied to any person within any culture in the world. Chinese internal medicine is not simply a collection of medicinals which happen to have originated in China, nor is Chinese dietary therapy limited to wontons and egg drop soup. The fundamental insights of Chinese dietary theory can be applied to any national or regional cuisine since all foods in everyone's stomachs must be turned into 100° F soup.

*I have practiced Chinese medicine in Asia, America, and Europe, and I believe that Chinese medicine is a system of thought about human physiology which is so universally valid that its logic can be applied to any person within any culture in the world.*

Although more and more, Western science supports the diet rural Chinese have been eating for millennia, the facts of Western science are not something immediately experienced on a human level. Cholesterol, enzymes, proteins, etc. are so removed from everyday experience, that people are prone to unconsciously dismiss them even if, theoretically, they know about them. For most people, these facts exist only as vague abstractions. Chinese medicine, on the other hand, has crafted its theories from metaphors taken from everyday reality. This is based on the perception that whatever goes on within the body is not something apart or fundamentally different from what goes on in the world at large.

Chinese medicine is based on the concept that the human organism is a microcosm of the larger, external macrocosm. As a holographic part of this macrocosm, one can

apply the same everyday metaphors one uses to understand the world at large to their own insides. Therefore, the analogies between digestion and a pot on a stove, to a car engine, to a still, and to Economics 101 are both accurate and empowering if seemingly simplistic. My experience as a clinician is that such explanations are able to influence the behavior of patients that more abstract explanations often cannot. It is my experience that when we really understand something as being immediately and undeniably true, we tend to act upon that belief.

Chinese dietary therapy gives us a set of explanations from our normal, everyday world. These explanations make sense and, more than that, when they are put into action, they work. As a human being and as a doctor, there are many things which I say I believe but really do not know for sure. But, when it comes to diet, I do know for sure that the wisdom of Chinese dietary therapy does work. I also know that diet is such an important part of our daily life that, unless one's diet is well-adjusted, no amount of herbs, acupuncture, or other medicines or treatments can achieve a complete and lasting cure. Therefore, whether for prevention or remedial treatment, proper diet is of the utmost importance, and dietary wisdom is something that everyone needs to know. Chinese medicine has that wisdom and I am offering it to you. Good luck and *bon appétit*.



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